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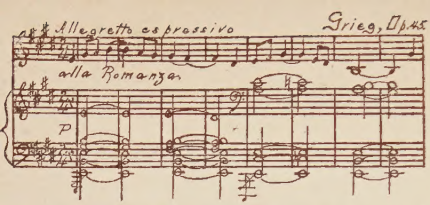
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SCANDINAVIAN CLASSICS

VOLUME XV

* * *

# THE CHARLES MEN

BY

VERNER VON HEIDENSTAM

PART I

THIS VOLUME IS ENDOWED BY
MR. CHARLES S. PETERSON
OF CHICAGO

# THE CHARLES MEN

BY

VERNER VON HEIDENSTAM

1859 2 1940

TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH

BY CHARLES WHARTON STORK

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY FREDRIK BÖÖK

PART I

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TO THE MEMORY OF
THOSE HEROES
WHO WITH HONESTY OF PURPOSE
HAVE BATTLED GALLANTLY
IN LOST CAUSES
AND GONE DOWN SMILING
BEFORE MANY SPEARS
THIS VOLUME
IS REVERENTLY DEDICATED
BY THE TRANSLATOR

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# VERNER VON HEIDENSTAM

*Author of "The Charles Men"*

I

FOR more than five years the world has been full of strife and the clash of weapons, and still the last shot has not been fired or the last sword thrust into its sheath. Humanity finds itself in a situation recalling that in which Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland, found himself during the English Revolution and Civil War; when Clarendon relates that he, "sitting among his friends, often, after a deep silence and frequent sighs, would, with a shrill and sad accent, ingeminate the word *Peace, Peace;* and would passionately profess that the very agony of the war, and the view of the calamities and desolation the kingdom did and must endure, took his sleep from him, and would shortly break his heart."

It is at this time that there is brought before the American public one of the most distinguished works of modern Swedish literature; a work devoted to the king who lived his whole life in the field and died in a trench, and who even in the days of Voltaire stood as the genius of war, the symbol of its desolating and misfortune-bringing might; a work that deals only with campaigns and battles, with slaughter and pillage, the wailing of the

wounded, and the long, hopeless agony of the captives—with all that humanity would fain forget, and cannot forget. The moment might seem to be ill chosen; more than one, perhaps, may feel himself minded as Aeneas when, having barely escaped from the burning of Troy, the swords of the Greeks, and the terrors of shipwreck, Queen Dido asks him to relate the story of his life, and he answers with a shudder: *Infandum, Regina, jubes renovare dolorem.*

But as surely as it is the province of fiction to give us what we do not have in fact, and to make us forget what hurts and oppresses us, so surely does it also have the mission of helping us to understand what we have gone through, of looking with clearer and purer eyes on the struggles and experiences of life. Fiction frees from external reality, not only by taking us away to the lands of fantasy and the world of beautiful visions, but by animating the dead matter of events, by giving significance and substance to things, by showing us the confusing spectacle *sub specie aeternitatis*. From this point of view, *The Charles Men* is a timely work. The fall of the Swedish empire, the desperate contest of an inflexible ruler for what he believed to be true and right, the boundless suffering of an ill-fated people, the ravages of hunger which they en-

dured, their growing despair and infinite fortitude, their inevitable ruin and eternal glory — such is the picture that appears before us in simple, majestic lines; a tragedy clear and compelling as one of the Greeks', composed by the very history of the world, and fitted to purify our hearts through terror and pity, as Aristotle taught. He who ponders the nature of war and the philosophy of history may win instruction from the epic which Swedish history and Swedish imagination together have formed about Charles XII and his men. It was no superficial romance of war, no rancorous and hypocritical chauvinism, that inspired Verner von Heidenstam. He saw before his eyes the misery and degradation of war; no pacifistic Barbusse has painted it in grimmer colors than he. He saw the problematic side of his hero; the rigid, petrified insensibility that misfortunes and spiritual torments wrought in the breast of the king. And yet he felt deeply the moral beauty, the human magnanimity, which these men of battle displayed, and which they gave to posterity as a noble, strengthening essence, extracted from withered herbs and crushed reeds, a *medicina mentis* for every one who must needs fight, endure, be vanquished and overpowered.

The highest praise one can give to *The Charles Men* is that this work, which was composed in deep-

est peace, has not lost its color and quality during the World War. Verner von Heidenstam has come forward among the pacifists side by side with Romain Rolland; but he does not belong to the superficial, blind zealots for peace of whom Paul Elmer More speaks in his profound and humane essay, *The Philosophy of War*. He belongs with those who have always seen mankind in all its contradictory profusion and have laid to heart what the great American critic writes: "Nor is war in itself wholly bestial. There has grown up amongst us of recent years a literature devoted to the propaganda of peace, both in the form of fiction and of exhortation, which throws into vivid relief all the horrors incidental to the battlefield, and slurs over and denies the honor and exaltation that are also a part of the soldier's life. That literature, I say boldly, is as false and mischievous as its Nietzschean antagonist. There is an element of heroism in war which, through all the waste and evil, has not been without its salutary effect. Is it because he has passed his life in a career entirely cruel and vile that the typical soldier, in his later years of retirement, is a man so true and honorable, often so gentle? Shall we, in our imagination of peace, forget all that we have felt in the reading of history, and slander our instincts?"

*True, honorable, gentle* — that is the stamp of the Charles men: the prisoners in Siberia, as they are gathered around the Bible in their bitter poverty; and those that have returned to their native land, as they set the plough in the earth to build a new Sweden on the ruins of the old.

It is not, however, the affair of the Swedish critic to subjoin the reflections to which *The Charles Men* invites, but to tell of the author who wrought the work, and to make clear what we admire in it.

II

Verner von Heidenstam is by birth an aristocrat; he was born on the sixth of July, 1859, at the manor house of Olshammar in Närke. As a boy he was thought to have lung trouble, and for that reason did not follow the usual course of education; instead he was sent to the milder climate of southern Europe. His youth received, therefore, a different impress from that of most Swedish authors of the same age. The horizon of the Mediterranean surrounded it. He lived in Italy and visited Greece, Egypt, Palestine, and Asia Minor; while for nearly eight years he was away from Sweden. The attraction toward the Orient was very strong in his nature; one has the impression that it was found in all of his family, because at the end of the seven-

teenth century one of his ancestors was the Swedish Minister at Constantinople, and was actively interested in Turkish civilization; another travelled to Persia, and died in 1878 as *chargé d'affaires* in Athens, and branches of the stock are still flourishing in Cyprus and Smyrna. Heidenstam wanted to become a painter, and was in fact a pupil at the studio of Gérôme in Paris. But it gradually became clear to him that he was above all a poet; in 1887 he returned to Sweden, and in 1888 made his debut with the collection, *Pilgrimage and Wander-Years*.

In this we have the verse of a painter; strongly colorful, plastic, racy, vivid. In the bold, sometimes careless, form there is nothing academic; all is seen and felt and experienced, the observation is sharp and the imagination lively. The young poet-artist reproduces the Italian carnival, the French life of the streets, impressions of Attic landscapes; he tells stories from the *Thousand and One Nights*, and conjures up before us the bazaars of Damascus. He loves the ancient world: its clear beauty, its fresh joy of life; he showers ridicule and scorn upon the ugly, sad, nervous, bustling present. In the carefree indolence of the East he sees the last reflection of the old happy innocence, and for that reason he loves it. He is a reckless epicurean, who lets the Egyptian priests of Hator proclaim:

*Wine, the kiss of a girl, and the daring jest that will startle*
*Senile women and men — to the gods above these are blameless.*

And yet amid all the gay hedonism in *Pilgrimage and Wander-Years* is a cycle of short poems, *Thoughts in Loneliness*, filled with brooding, melancholy, and sombre longing.

In the year 1888 Heidenstam brought out a volume of travel descriptions, *From Col di Tenda to Blocksberg;* and in the novel *Endymion*, published in 1889, he displayed a picture of the East which is stifled to death in the embrace of the West. In a couple of brochures, *Renascence* (1889) and *Pepita's Wedding* (1890), the latter a rollicking *jeu d'esprit* executed in collaboration with the poet and literary historian, Oscar Levertin, he attacked the prevalent naturalism, the gray-weather mood in life and fiction. With the right of a strong, youthful temperament he craved an art that would move freely and boldly, unfettered by social doctrines and pseudo-scientific theories of the day; he wished to give back their dues to the imagination, to the love of beauty, and insisted upon the sovereignty of the artist. These writings took on a decisive meaning in the development of Swedish literature: during the decade of 1880 Sweden had been dominated by the "literature of indignation," literature with a

purpose, by the naturalism of the positivists, and by methodized prose. Heidenstam turned the current: the decade of 1890 became lyrical and imaginative, the decade of free and sovereign poetry. Gustaf Fröding, Selma Lagerlöf, Per Halström, and Erik Axel Karlfeldt carried out the program that Heidenstam and Levertin had laid down.

But the joy of life and enthusiasm for beauty, which the young Heidenstam had proclaimed, soon gave place in himself to deeper moods. Even the great fantastic epic, *Hans Alienus*, which he completed in 1892, is a monument on the grave of his care-free and indolent youth. He discovered that beauty cannot satisfy the hunger of the soul; his hero, a pilgrim in the storied lands of the East, is a brooding Faust, who even in the pleasure-gardens of Sardanapalus cannot cease from his painful search after the meaning of life. He is driven back by his yearning to the snowy country of his fathers, far up in the Swedish forest of Tiveden.

In the collection, *Poems*, which Heidenstam brought out in 1895, the horizon of the Mediterranean has disappeared. The soughing fir-trees tell him stories different from those he listened to among dancers and camel-drivers. The love he now sings is that which a man's own effort has brought to birth, and which "flings arms of flame around

heaven and earth." The meagre land rises before his glance with new beauty: it is the stretch of earth which his fathers cleared with toil and self-denial. No one has praised home more fervently and intimately than the pilgrim and traveller, the restless wanderer:

*A home! 'T is like a fortress*
*By walls securely shielded,—*
*Our world, our own, the one thing*
*We in this world have builded.*

Heidenstam's nationalism, which had its theoretical expression in many of the essays which he collected in 1899 under the title *Thoughts and Sketches*, is above all born of a deep filial affection for the past. Annals, monuments, ruins, and portraits become living realities to the man of powerful imagination; wherever he goes, the present moment unfolds and lets us look into the ancient records; the dead surround us like gigantic spirits, overshadowing our thoughts. But despite this entering into the past, which is so characteristic of Heidenstam, his traditional bent has never become an inflexible conservatism. There is a strong democratic current throughout all of his markedly aristocratic nature. Among *Poems* is included *Singers in the Steeple*, where he celebrates the idea of brotherhood, and makes the classes privileged as to power and gold

pour their treasures into a cup, on which is inscribed:

*Not joy to the rich, to the poor man care;*
*Our toil and our pleasure alike we share.*

The collection of poems that gives the strongest expression to his passion for his country, *A People* (1902), contains the lyric *Fellow-Citizens*, where he takes up the cause of universal suffrage and thoroughgoing democracy.

*The Charles Men*, which appeared in 1897–98, is Heidenstam's chief work in prose; to Swedish readers it is evident that only verse allows his artistic greatness to come to its full right. *The Charles Men* forms the introduction to a series of historical descriptions: *St. Birgitta's Pilgrimage* (1901), which sets before us the greatest religious personality of Sweden in the Middle Ages; *Folke Filbyter* (1905) and *The Legacy of Bjälbo* (1907), which render the ancient and mediaeval times in pictures composed around the Folkung family; *The Swedes and their Chieftains* (1908–10), which makes all the Swedish annals pass by in review. The last-named work is written in the form of a reader for Swedish schools. In the collections of tales, *St. George and the Dragon* (1900), and the volume of sagas and stories which he collected in 1904 under the title *Forest Murmurs*,

are to be found some of his most original and personal creations. His last book is *New Poems* (1915), where the simple and compact form of the lyrics expresses the noble, quiet humanism of the ripened and matured man.

After his homecoming in 1887, Heidenstam settled for a time on his ancestral estate of Olshammar, but in 1890 shifted to Djursholm near Stockholm, and in 1897 participated in the founding of the great national-liberal newspaper, the *Svenska Dagblad*, whose program was defence and reform. In 1900 he settled at Naddö (near Vadstena), on the shore of Lake Wettern, which he loved so deeply and on whose strand was situated the home of his childhood. In 1917 he departed thence, after his third marriage, like both of those preceding, had been dissolved by divorce, and in 1919 he betook himself afresh to foreign travel. In 1910 he was made an honorary Doctor of Philosophy by the University of Stockholm; in 1912 he became a member of the Swedish Academy, and in 1916 received the Nobel Prize for Literature.

III

*The Charles Men* is a poem in prose. Heidenstam's technic has all the freedom, abandon, even caprice that belongs to verse. There is no steady and clear

stream of narrative in his work; he leaps over what is inessential, and his imagination concentrates itself on the scene, the figure, the detail that strikes him as significant. This technic is in accord with the historical atmosphere. Uniform realism, methodical description, and painstaking motivation may be in place in a modern novel; if, on the other hand, it is a question of conjuring up visions from the past, the poet must not bring his figures out into the full daylight — that can only lead to destroying the illusion, as when masks go about in the sunshine. We must have a broad river of darkness, which contains all the mystery of the past, and against this black background the figures and scenes may glimmer forth — symbolic flashes of that life whose depth and scope one cannot define, but only surmise.

That Heidenstam dreamed at one time of becoming a painter, to this every page of *The Charles Men* bears witness. What a mighty composition is the picture of Stockholm's castle in flames which closes the first narrative, *The Green Corridor!* Heidenstam has rendered the picturesque element of Charles XII's history with the most finished art: not only the gloomy scenes in black, gray, and white from the wintry land in the North, but also the variegated and highly colored representations

of the wanderings in the war. The Queen of the Marauders among the Cossacks by the Beresina; the march of Mazeppa, surrounded by drunken Zaporogeans; the flaxen-haired Stupid Swede in the serail of the sultana, among gilded parrot-cages and black cypresses — one could not draw a more masterly contrast between the simple poverty of the Charles folk and the exoticism of the Orient.

The artist reveals himself everywhere, but so, too, does the aristocrat. The patriarchal idyl of the country manor is immortalized in the airy *Midsummer Sport*. The gay, care-free spirit of adventure that played through the centuries among the Swedish nobility is incarnate in the indomitable Grothusen who is always in debt; and when Rika Fuchs rides in front of his regiment to make an estimate of his property, every Swede must recognize the national sense of humor. The joking spirit has undergone an intimate union with a proud and taciturn sense of duty. It is only in the solitude of the prison cell that Gustaf Celsing gives words to the deep grief that burns among these officers, humiliated, insulted, trampled to earth in the service of their beloved master:

*In alien places*
*His men of proud races*
*As beggars must crouch.*

Even when dispersed in slavery, they preserve their sense of order and responsibility; they keep up their muster-rolls and accounts, they are not a horde but a people, a state (*The General of Papers*).

Of the glittering conqueror, "King Charles, the youthful hero," illuminated by the sunshine of triumph and success, whom Tegnér celebrated a hundred years after, Heidenstam has not much to tell. Only for a brief second may we catch a glimpse of his boyish ardor as he steps ashore at Zeeland. It is in the time of adversity and defeat that he begins to interest Heidenstam. When the king feels himself to be alone, abandoned by God and man, the transfiguration of poetry falls over his form. He is a wholly tragic figure. The author himself has propounded his view of Charles XII in an essay: "A tragic problem comprises a duel between conflicting claims of right which appear so strong that it lies beyond human justice to reject either one of them entirely. Not only is it impossible to cut the blood-red thread that the logic of misfortune spins through the tragedy, but even in respect to the final moral judgment we cannot get further than a dim scrutiny. This awakens sympathy, if not a full and devoted admiration for the tragic hero; but it arouses, too, inquisitive reflection, the search for a possible solution, however impossible it may be to

find. The tragic problem is therefore insoluble to mankind, and from that fact, first and last, comes the general confusion in contemplating Charles XII, the continual dissension between our admiration on one side and our moral demands on the other. If a solution were ever possible, it would mean that the king was not really tragic; but we need have no fear. What is tragic in the deepest classical sense, if not the strife between the claims of personal and of universal justice that fill his life as we behold it? He finds himself treacherously attacked and ensnared. He cannot escape from the single thought that he must get back what force is tearing out of his hands. The prudent and the exhausted cry out for him to make peace, but he cannot overlook the thought that at the first opportunity the enemy will again fall upon him, if he does not first strike them to earth for a long period. It is not he that has made the Swedish empire, but if it collapses, it is he that must bear the shame; and the more his honor weakens, the more ambition becomes his all-engulfing passion. In this manner he assumes in his person all of his people's demands for justice, and tragedy spreads its wings over millions."

The hero of this tragedy is, accordingly, not only the king, but the Swedish people as well. In *Poltava* Lewenhaupt says: "The wreath he twined for him-

self slid down upon his subjects instead." And in *A Hero's Funeral* Brother George answers the slanderers and revilers: "Are not your eyes opened yet so as to see that it was our own secret will and desire which he preserved against our own indecision, like a banner against a rebellious guard?"

*The Charles Men*, therefore, is not only a monument over the fall of the Swedish empire, but also a hymn on the beauty in its destruction, the hopeless magnanimity of obedience to duty, the poetry of sacrifice. It expresses Heidenstam's deeply tragic philosophy of life. The highest that a man can attain is to fall with honor, and such is the fate of the best. Happiness is common and superficial; suffering is holy and great.

None of the stories in *The Charles Men* is more deeply characteristic of Heidenstam than *The Stupid Swede*. The parks and pavilions of the Turkish serail, with their roses and jewels, symbolize the oriental doctrine of pleasure and beauty that he celebrated in his youth. But at the moment when the awkward and joyless Swedish thrall stands among the glittering, soulless dancing-girls, who know nothing more of earth than that it is lovely, and dream of nothing else than of a kiosk with red damask hangings and perfumed fountains, her form suddenly takes on an exaltation that none of the

others possesses; and when she seizes the basket with the snake in order to fulfil her duty, it is she who is the most beautiful. Beauty of self-sacrifice, of misfortune, of the soul, causes her to shine more brightly than even the odalisque Evening Starlight.

Anatole France has related a legend of the juggler of the Madonna who worshipped the Holy Virgin, and won her favor by the naïve piety with which he performed his tricks in her honor. *The Stupid Swede* is a legend of that soul-temper which transforms ugliness to grace and misfortune to harmony. That soul-temper is glorified in the concluding words of *The Charles Men*, where a benediction is called down upon the people who in their fall from greatness caused their poverty to be glorified before the world.

FREDRIK BÖÖK

*Lund, Sweden, December*, 1919

The translator wishes to express his gratitude to Mr. O. A. Linder of Chicago for his collation of the English text with the original, and to Mr. Edwin Björkman of New York for assistance in certain difficult passages.

# THE CHARLES MEN

BY

VERNER VON HEIDENSTAM

# THE CHARLES MEN

## *The Green Corridor*

IN the castle attic, where the fire-chief sold brandy and ale, a tall, narrow-shouldered customer had been thrust down the stairs and his empty pewter pot thrown after him, so that it rolled between his shoes. His worsted stockings were mended and dirty. He had tied his neck-cloth over his mouth and unshaven cheeks, and he continued to stand with his hands in his coat-tail pockets.

"Show out crazy Ekerot!" said the fire-chief. "He has spit tobacco plug into the ale, stuck Peter Painter with a bodkin, and is full of mischief all through. Then shut up the folding table! There is a command to bar the castle gates, for now it will soon be over with His Royal Majesty's life."

One of the wardens was Charles XI's faithful old servant, Hakon. He had a tranquil face, but walked so bowlegged in his stiff clothes that he looked as if he had just dismounted from a horse. He picked up the pot and stuck it good-naturedly under Ekerot's arm.

"I shall follow you, constable," he said,—"or lieutenant, or whatever I should call you."

"Lars Ekerot is a captain in His Gracious Majesty's battle fleet," answered Ekerot, "and travelled

and learned in tongues he is, too. Here in the castle attic one sees no distinction between folk and folk. I shall leave a report and complain of it, that I shall. Have I not told you that soon fire shall rain from heaven, and every rafter in this house break out into bright flame? Mercenary councillors, unrighteous judgments, execration, and lamentation, —that has become our daily bread, and the wrath of Heaven rests heavy on the land."

"Lieutenant—or captain—you need not spread talk of worse misfortunes than those which God has already given us to bear. Round about in the suburbs has the fire made way, and for ten years we have had failure of harvest and famine. Four bushels of rye already cost twelve rix-dollars in silver. Soon fodder will run short even in the royal stable, and the boats with imported grain lie frozen solid out by the coast."

Ekerot went down the steps beside him and looked around without fixing his small, restless eyes on any definite object. Sometimes he stood still, nodding and talking to himself in an undertone.

Through the loopholes came glimpses of the castle grounds far below and the covered terrace with obelisks and sentries who went back and forth in the trumpeters' gallery. Beyond the snow-covered towers and roofs, small groups of people moved on the frozen Mälar between King's Island and

Söder. The light of the March evening shone slanting through one of the halls in the western wing of the castle, so that it appeared as if light had been kindled in the chandelier.

"Yes, yes," mumbled Ekerot, "that shall all burn, all — all that which was our shame, all that which was our greatness. I have seen shining fellows in the heavens, and when I sit with my pipe at night, I see in the tobacco smoke wonderful planets, which show me that the old order of the world is upset. In Hungary and Germany rain down swarms of Arabia's grasshoppers. The fire-spurting mountains cast up glowing stones. Two years ago we had grass finger-high in the park in February and heard the birds of spring, but in September I picked strawberries at Essing. It is in such times that the Lord God opens the eyes of his elect so that they see what is hid."

"In God's name, do not talk so!" stammered Hakon. "Do you see your visions waking or asleep?"

"Between the two."

"I promise that I shall report every word to His Royal Majesty himself, if you, lieutenant, will recount for me quite veraciously all that you have seen and known. Do you see down below there the two windows where the shutters are closed? It isn't half an hour since I was in there. There His Royal Majesty sits in a chair made into a bed with covers

and pillows, and he has become so small and dried up that he is only nose and lips. And he cannot raise his head. His poor Majesty, who has to endure such agony, though he is but some forty and odd years! Formerly, when he came limping through the door, I was most glad if I could slip out, but though I am only the least among servants, he can now put his arms around my neck and press me to him with streaming tears. I do not believe that he feels much more warmly for his son than he did for his wife. When he sends for him, he is brief of speech and mostly sits and looks at him. He speaks now only of his kingdom — and again of his kingdom. Up to a week ago I saw on his knee house-inspections and tariffs and such trifles, but now he has written down his secret instructions to his son and laid the letter in a sealed iron casket. As soon as any one steps into the room, it is as if both with his feverishly gleaming eyes and his words he stammered a constant: 'Help me, help me to uphold the kingdom, to make my son worthy and prudent. The kingdom, the kingdom!'"

Hakon passed his hand across his forehead, and they went on down the steps from loophole to loophole.

"In the room below us to the left is Her Majesty, the queen dowager. She has locked herself up during these last days, and not even Tessin slips in with his portfolios. No one knows just what she is about,

but I can well believe that she does her best to banish her sad thoughts with a game of cards. There 's a tinkling and jingling of watch-charms on the edge of the card table, and a crunching and a rustling and a frizzling of lace and ruffs — and a cane with a gold knob slips to the floor — "

"And the pretty Lady Hedwig Stenbock, who stands behind the chair, picks it up."

"That she certainly does n't, for she is long since married and old and ugly, and at her own home. You live only in that which was and that which is to be."

"That may be." Ekerot screwed up his eyes and pointed to the north wing of the castle, which had just been reared by Tessin, after the old one had been levelled to the earth. Some scaffolds were still standing with fir branches on the highest pinnacles.

"Well, who lives under that long box-lid? Fie! There lives no one at all — and neither will any one come to live there, that I know. Why could n't it be left to stand as it was? Devil take the Gottorp woman that put all this building nonsense into the head of His Royal Majesty! You see, warder, just as every man has his soul, so every old house has in it all sorts of spooks and other creatures of darkness, which are disturbed and uncomfortable when people come with pick-axe and trowel. Do you remember the Green Corridor which used to run under the section of the roof above the old castle

church? It was there that for the first time I got my eyes opened. Oh, I 'll tell you all about it. I will tell you the whole story, warder, if you will follow me home and then keep your promise to relate every word to His Royal Majesty himself."

Having now come down to the entrance door, they went on the drawbridge across the castle moat. A courier with a leathern bag on his back was just about to dismount from his horse, and his answer to the many questions was heard through the trampling of feet and the orders.

"For six miles north of Stockholm seen only three human beings — They sat by the side of the road and fed on an animal that had died a natural death. In Norrland a pound of meal mixed with bark cost five rix-dollars in silver. Soldiers starving to death — Regiments hardly half their complement — "

Ekerot nodded assentingly, as if all this had been known to him long since, and he continued to walk beside Hakon with his pewter pot under his arm and his hands stuck in his coat tails.

When they had come up to his attic room at Trångsund he gave Hakon a mistrustful side-look, and when he stuck the key into the lock he ascertained carefully that the door had not been opened in his absence. The room was large and bare. In the window stood a cage with a squirrel, and on one wall was a medley of unlike pieces of

money nailed up in rows. There were bright Elbing rix-dollars, small and large copper coins, a five-ducat piece of Reval, and even a couple of Palmstruch's old bank-notes, which had been worthless for thirty years. Ekerot advanced, inspected, and counted the money.

"A fool," he said, "sinks his possessions so deep that he cannot himself keep watch over them, but I want to have them under my eyes, so that I can easily count them into a sack, when the great fire comes."

Out of one corner, Ekerot carefully took five logs, which he put in the fireplace and lighted with a piece of tarred stick. Thereupon he and Hakon filled their pipes, and as there were no chairs, they sat on the floor in front of the blaze.

"Well, let us hear now," said Hakon.

Ekerot narrated:

Never have I seen anything so frightful as the Green Corridor. That was at the time when I was constable with the battle fleet. Now they have given me my little pension of two hundred and fifty dollars. Oh, to be sure. I was as good as driven from the service because people were afraid lest otherwise I should end as admiral-in-chief. And *that* Hans Wachtmeister wants to be himself. "The fellow is crazy!" he screamed on the deck, when I politely asked him to raise his hat before he ordered me into

the rigging. And so it was all up with me. Crazy Ekerot I was called wherever I came and went. So it keeps on. A poor journeyman carries a comrade to the grave; then he carries his master to the grave; and at last, for a groat, he carries one after another, gets himself a glazed hat and a long black cloak, and when he is in a hurry rolls of braid fall out of his pocket—and children take to their heels and weep and scream: "The corpse bearer, the corpse bearer!" But though one may become such a bugbear, at the beginning we are, to be sure, all baked of the same dough. Report that now, word for word, to His Royal Majesty in person. Ah well, at that time I was quite skilful in drawing and sketching. A few days before that quarrel with Wachtmeister, I therefore received a gracious command to take with me another constable, who was called Nils, and appear in the store-room above the old papist church in the castle tower that stood by the river. There we were to draw a broken lantern of a galleon, according to which the queen dowager wished to have a new one made for her sloops on the Mälar.

When we had sat there in that manner for a day, gambling and worrying over the smashed lantern of the galleon, which the devil himself could n't have drawn, a merry fit came upon me, and I cried: "Nils, have you ever seen a dog with five legs?"

When Nils shrugged his shoulders, I went on:

"I saw one just now in Iron Square. He walked on four legs, and the fifth he had in his mouth."

Nils got angry, and to provoke him I cried still louder: "Clever you are not. Let 's see if you are brave. I 'll wager you this pewter pint measure filled with good Spanish wine and with a ducat at the bottom that I shall go alone at guard-bell through the Green Corridor."

Nils replied: "I know that when you set your mind on anything it 's no use trying to keep you from it, and I don't want that you should think me stingy of gifts. Therefore, my dear Ekerot, I take your wager as you desire, but I will not bear the responsibility to your old mother if any ill befalls you. Therefore I prefer to go home to my place. In daytime this splendid building is fine enough to see; but at night strange things are supposed to happen here, and I 'd rather sleep in the wretchedest hole in the suburb."

I called him poltroon, and let him ramble off home. As soon as I was alone, I noticed that it had already begun to grow dark, and, in order to harden myself, I went up the two or three winding stairways to the Green Corridor and looked through the keyhole.

The green paint had fallen down in many places, so that the older bright red color shone out. Along the walls stood all sorts of household furniture that had been worn out and carried up there. I saw cabinets

and chairs, and representations of dogs and horses, and in the far corner a bed with drawn curtains. On the sides were hidden recesses, where there was a dropping and dripping from the leaky roofing.

It was Walpurgis Night and therefore somewhat light, and this restored me to a certain feeling of security, so that I could sit down and wait, but I knew that wondrous beings had their resort up there under the roof. The warders called them night-goblins, because only at twilight did they lift up the dark boards and stick out their heads. They were not larger than a three-years' child, were brown all over, naked, and had the bodies of women. Often they would sit mounted on a cabinet and wave their arms, and he who happened to touch a night-goblin died within the year. They were wont to spring about in the attics, and sometimes they shrieked in the privies and clattered under the seats, so that the court ladies dared not go there, but rather lay in bed with colic all night.

As soon as I heard the guard-bell, I opened the door wide.

I took a step forward, but my terror was so great that I remained standing with hands on the door-jamb and only stared. Through a bare space in one of the chalked panes I looked all the way up to the tower at Brunkeberg, and that strengthened me so that I sprang right into the Green Corridor, in order that the ringing should not be still before I had got

back. As long as it sounded, the creatures of darkness would have no power.

In about the middle of the corridor I suddenly saw something dark shoot forward along the curtain-bed and slink down in one of the armchairs to hide or wait. My left knee gave way of itself, and I heard the echo of my scream through the attics. It was from that time that my eyes were opened so that men called me crazy.

Against the light of the window, I saw that a man was sitting in the chair. He remained as motionless as I. All at once he seized me by the arm and whispered through his teeth: "*Figlio di un cane!* Spy? What are you? The queen dowager's warder?"

"God bless me!" I stammered, for now I understood that it was a fellow human being, and by the trembling and fumbling hands I comprehended that he was no less frightened than I myself. I even noticed that he was in his stocking feet, and had his shoes stuck in his bosom.

I summoned my wits and described my foolish enterprise, and finally I was believed.

"Such a damned, dilapidated old nest," growled the man, to excuse his own astonishment. "There are such drippings from the roof that my feet are wet through. As sure as I live, there shall be a new house here. My good man, if you can find the way, help me through this labyrinth of attics to the ballroom. Who I am is no matter."

"Very good," I answered, though I recognized the gracious Chamberlain Tessin.

He was silent, and took me by the coat tail, and so I turned and went before him. I imagine that at bottom we were both equally pleased at having happened upon each other. When we came down to the ballroom, he ordered me to stand outside the door, but I heard the night-goblins jumping in the dark behind us, and I kept my hand on the lock, so that I was instantly able to open the door again and steal in after him unnoticed. Through the window I saw the river, and within, around the walls, stood a multitude of leaning side-scenes, painted with trimmed trees and white temples.

Tessin stood in the middle of the hall and clapped his hands thrice.

A lady rose behind the side-scenes, and opened a little dark lantern. Who should it be but Hedwig Stenbock, the queen dowager's highborn lady-in-waiting! "Look, look, look," I thought, biting my lips, "has that foreign dandy there climbed so high already?"

"Hedwig, my dearest of all in the world!" said he. "Let us go directly to your room. No arguments, *ma chère!*"

Hedwig Stenbock was then nearly thirty-five, and she went so stiffly and rigidly to meet him that I should not have believed she had either heart or soul, had she not all at once become wholly trans-

formed and showed the blood in her cheeks, when he embraced her.

Then I forgot myself, and burst out half aloud, "Aha, yes!"

Tessin turned around, but he was so hot that he only knitted his eyebrows and spilled out all his words in explaining my presence.

"We might have needed some assistant in any case," said he, "and Ekerot may be as good as any one else. If he knows how to keep silent, he shall not be without reward."

He then ordered me to take the dark lantern and go through the empty conference chambers—thanks for the favor!—and on, by a course which he described, to the corridor where the queen dowager's ladies dwelt—sweet sleep, my pretties! As soon as I had carefully ascertained that no flies in court dress were buzzing around there, I was to return and so report.

I had, however, something else to announce, when I did come back. I had heard the night-goblins clatter inside the door of the Art Room, and had seen them running with small sparks of fire in their hands down the stairs to the Archive Hall, where the affairs of the kingdom lay in the wall cabinets. Finally, in the aforesaid corridor I had come upon one of the queen dowager's warders, who sat asleep over his dark lantern with his back against the wall.

"He has been sent there since I left," said Hedwig Stenbock, and again she stood as stiff and straight as at first. "He does not suspect that the bird is already flown. But how to get back?"

She pushed Tessin's arms from her and became thoughtful.

"Long have I feared and suspected. To-night scandal has come upon us. Her Majesty is jealous."

Tessin clutched in the air with his hands as if toward invisible swords and daggers, and his eyes flashed and sparkled.

"Jealous! Of me? She is forty and grizzled, and she is somewhat hoarse and rough of voice like a man. Shall I never escape hearing that babble? With whom should I have laid my plans and sought gracious protection, if not with Sweden's Hedwig Eleonora?" He bowed. "Yet fear not, my dearest one, for no shame shall attach to your days, but this very night you shall follow me hence. A sleigh can always be had—and then—*addio!* In Italy I have friends."

"God in heaven knows," she answered, "that I will always follow you wherever you desire, and for men I care not at all, but will rather be by you than forsake you, yet we must first consider with a certain friend what is wisest. I am thinking of Erik Lindskiöld, who this evening sits and drinks with His Majesty. Ekerot shall go down across the courtyard to the king's little staircase and wait there

till Lindskiöld comes. Then—with many apologies—he shall entreat him to hurry up here—to me."

Tessin made a dissuasive motion with his hand, but I paid little heed to the cavalier, finding a greater pleasure in obeying such a noble lady.

It had drawn far into the night when I came back with Lindskiöld. He interrogated me fully about everything. His peruke swayed, and he swore kindly, guffawed, and was as noisy as if the whole castle were his.

When he came into the ballroom, he bent one knee, while he threw his hat into the air and cried: "Are ye altogether staggering mad, my worthy folk, who of love would partake and never forsake, though all to hinder you watch and wake? Your inclination gives more delectation than elevation. Paff, poof! A poor master builder, who thrives by adventure, though good luck bewilder, may not without censure suppose himself worth, sir, a lady of birth, sir. That day began mankind's vexation when Adam awoke at Eve's creation and said, impelled by a new proclivity: 'Congratulations on your nativity!'"

"Fiddlededilly, reeling—silly!" muttered Tessin to his lady. "That 's what they call the Swedish *esprit*. Lindskiöld is drunk."

"Only a trifle. He is in the most favorable mood."

Lindskiöld did not hear them, but went on so that the wide hall rang: "I have long suspected this, and the titled class is likely to take it ill. But travel to Italy! Ah, bah! Here the chamberlain has a land that needs his genius. Let him look me in the whites of the eyes, and say whether he can travel from the designs for the royal castle that he has spread out on my table, whether anything in the world is as dear to him as his art."

Tessin became blood-red, and looked down in the light of the lantern.

"I have determined to marry Chamberlain Tessin," said Hedwig Stenbock, "and that is how this has happened."

Lindskiöld laid his hand on his heart: "Of course, of course! says the royal widow. A wreath will I twine, the best to be had, of flower and vine from my Lindevad. I was born at no manor, with chapel and banner, and my sire was a smith, but they made him forthwith — aha, burgomaster of Skenninge. Think if the chamberlain had sprung from Skenninge. How would he have built then? A new royal castle in the Skenninge style? A sight for the city, or the devil may get me! What pride would be his to be just who he is!"

Lindskiöld seized Tessin by the arm in a lofty, threatening way, with a gesture as if he suddenly threw off a spattered masquerade cloak.

"Let him calm his ardor for a moon or so. To

begin with, the chamberlain now kisses the hand of his chosen one, goes three steps backwards, makes a reverence, and then follows with me. Silent, when I talk in the halls of the king! Ekerot goes back to the dowager's warder, blows out his lantern, wakes him with a sound and expressive box on the ear, and throws his shoes after him when he runs, so that he believes it is the night-goblins. Afterwards the gracious young lady returns unseen and tranquil to her room. It is fully determined that she, in due time, shall go along on a trip to Pomerania. Then the chamberlain overtakes her, and marries her in all secrecy. His Majesty I shall see to here at home. The Gottorp misfortune—I mean the royal dowager—crafty woman—her the devil himself cannot control, but the high-noble set, them I 've heard assessed before the Royal Commission, and I shall know them well enough to remind them what they are worth. New times are at hand here. Ah, my children, my children, if you knew how the breast fills, when one stands at the helm of state and steers according to distant beacons, whose name one dares not once utter to His Royal Majesty himself. But for the present, rely on my word. Here where we now stand, the chamberlain shall build his immortality."

Confusedly Tessin drew his hand to his lips, and when I had performed my errand with the warder, he handed me, with a supercilious grimace,

the two Palmstruch notes that hang there on the wall.

"There you have your promised reward, if you are silent," he said.

But then began my visions and misfortunes, and when I sat sick in my room at home, my ailments became a by-word in the square — gout, lung trouble, snuff disease, accidental bullets in the leg — and buzzing in the head. And when I pulled out the Palmstruch notes which the dishonorable villain stuck into my coat pocket, I found that they had lost all value many Lord's years before. Report that now to His Royal Majesty's person!

Ekerot would have related still more, but there was a violent banging on the door, and a messenger called Hakon to the king, who was worse.

Some days later, on the second day after Easter, people said that the king lay at the point of death, but Ekerot only nodded in his usual way as if it had all been known to him before. A crowd of men and maid-servants, who had been dismissed in the country because of the famine, stood homeless and despairing on the streets in the snow, and Ekerot went from group to group with his hands in his coat tails, and listened and nodded. By night he composed letters of prophecy, which he then presented to the court pastor superior, Wallin. "The unfortunate," he wrote, "are accustomed to see in the

darkness, so that in the end they can discern that which is dim and hidden to those blinded by the light of prosperity."

One windy April day, when he had just stuck his last letter of prophecy under Wallin's entry door and come home to his room, he sat down at the window and prattled with the squirrel. Now and then he chewed at some dried pears, which he picked out of a drawer. Just as he was sitting so, he heard the tocsin and alarm, and when he stretched himself out through the window, he saw the castle roof enveloped in yellow smoke. Turning around to the room, he began to take down the coins from the wall, counting them accurately into his pocket. He trembled, and his teeth chattered, as, with the squirrel cage under one arm and the pewter pot under the other, he toddled down the stairs to the street.

He was jostled against the house wall, and stood staring up at the castle, where roaring streaks of fire already spurted forth under the dark rafters. Soon all three of the wings flamed like huge bonfires, and the thunderous noise of the conflagration drowned the tocsin and the trumpet flourishes.

"Look, look!" he said. "The night-goblins must out into the light of day. Look how they jump in rows along the roof-ridges with fire in their hands! Now they climb up on the tower roof and hop over the new Tessin addition, which disturbed their com-

fort. They want to burn themselves in it. This is only the beginning. It will all burn — all."

Soldiers and warders thronged on the castle bridge amid barrels of water and itinerant chairs, cabinets, and paintings. Under the two lions that held the coat-of-arms above the door of the gate stepped forth Hedwig Eleonora, the mother of the Charleses. Two courtiers supported and almost carried her, for she shrunk together, and constantly wanted to stand still and look back. The wind raised the mantilla over her silver-gray hair, and the next moment drew it as a veil over her eyes red with weeping, her proud aquiline nose, and thickly painted cheeks.

"The pyre is burning under your son's body," shouted Ekerot, pointing. "And the throne on which your grandson has ascended is burning, and before you close your eyes his whole realm shall be burned in ashes. Don't you remember that he was born with blood on his hands?"

He made his way anxiously along the wall and around the corner to Trångsund. Sparks rose to heaven like stars, and beyond the churchyard wall one saw the great castle tower called the Three Crowns, which rose four full stories above the highest roof. With every story that the fire conquered, the smoke burst out through the loopholes as from cannon. That 's the night-goblins, thought he, who fire victory salutes, while the citadel of the Vasa

kings is burning. Again and again, the smoke enveloped the ancient arms of the realm on the spire of the tower — and again, dizzyingly high, gleamed forth the golden crowns, like three storm birds resting on their wings. The ringers of St. Nicholas Church climbed up the steps to swing even the great bell and the preliminary bell, but when they heard the rumble, as the tower floors and vaulting plunged down together, pulling the spire and arms with them in the fall, they turned and fled. Smitten with terror, children and women began to sob and run, and it was told that people at the South Gate saw an insane man steal out with a squirrel cage and a pewter pot, singing in an undertone an old song of penance.

## *A Sermon*

IN Great Church the audience arose from their pews and looked toward the armory, before which Charles XII dismounted from his carriage.

He was a handsome, but slender and undeveloped boy. His hat, edged with plumes, sat comically in its smallness upon the great curly peruke, and when the king stuck it under his arm, his gestures were nervous and embarrassed. He walked trippingly, a trifle bent in the knees, as was the fashion, and his eyes were lowered. His costume of mourning was precious with ermine on the facings and blonde lace around the gloves, and on his high-heeled shoes of cordovan leather he had buckles and ribbon rosettes.

Bewildered by the inquisitive glances, he took his place in the royal pew, under the gilded crown upborne by genii. He sat stiffly, facing the altar, but was unable to collect his thoughts around the sacred ceremonies. When, at last, the minister stepped into the pulpit and with an epigram and a vigorous blow on the back of the book aroused a subdued murmur, the king reddened and felt himself caught in the very act. Directly, however, his thoughts became the same rebels as they were just before, and went their own ways. To cover his shyness, he began to pluck off the black points on the ermine.

"Look at un," said a woman in one of the bot-

tom pews. "He still needs to wear out his father's rod. Has the devil bit un i' th' fingers?"

"That 's for her to say, the dirty wench, who has traipsed into a higher pew than belongs to her!" answered a grand lady, and pushed her headlong out into the aisle.

The old man with a cane, who stood down by the door and had the office of going around and cuffing on the neck those of the congregation who went to sleep, tapped on the floor and menaced with his hand, but the scuffle was heard as far up as the pews of the nobility, so that the fine gentlemen turned their heads, and the preacher straightway interpolated the following words:

"Concord, I said, Christian concord! Whither does she repair with her mild sweet-gruel? To the populace, perchance? Hold her fast! In God's house or around His Royal Majesty's own person, perchance? Well for him who finds her! Therefore I say unto you, ye princes of the earth, seek diligently for concord and love, and lift not into strife the sword which God has placed in your hand, but lift it only for the defence of your subjects."

At this allusion the young king again blushed red and laughed shamefacedly. Even Hedwig Eleonora, the queen dowager, in the royal pew just opposite to him, nodded simperingly, but the young princesses beside her laughed most of all. Ulrica Eleanora sat tolerably stiff, but Hedwig Sophia

leaned forward with her slim long neck. In happy consciousness that she wore gloves, so that her malformed thumbs were not visible, she held the prayer-book in front of her mouth.

The king now became bolder and looked around. In what a strange temple of the Lord he found himself on this day! The whole church was overcrowded with the furniture and objects of art which had been saved from the fire at the castle. Only the middle aisle was free. In the corner up by the altar stood, rolled up, Ehrenstrahl's representations of the Crucifixion and the Last Judgment, and behind the tomb of the Skyttes he recognized the plume-tufts and the green curtains from the bed on which his father, sitting crosswise and supported on pillows, had given up the ghost. The recollection of this, however, moved him not, since he had scarcely felt for his father anything but fear. He had seen in him rather the deputy appointed by God than the dear blood-relation, and in his thoughts as in his speech he preferred to call him plainly and simply, the *old* king. Like two questing bees, his eyes wandered over the numerous familiar objects, and tarried long at last on a coat-of-arms on the nearest pillar.

There, since several years, rested beneath the floor his teacher, Nordenhjelm, the good-hearted old Norcopensis whom he had loved with childish enthusiasm. He recalled hours of study early in

winter mornings, when he sat and learned the four branches of ciphering, and poked at the wick with the candle-snuffers, or when Nordenhjelm told stories of the heroes of Greece and Rome. Since the old king's death he had walked in a dream. He understood that he must not show gayety, that lamentation was the only thing he had license to claim, but at the same time he saw that there were many who were quite ready in private to court his favor by amusing him though attracting as little attention as possible, now with one prank, now with another. Even His Excellency Piper could at the same time dry his tears and beg the king not to forsake his youthful sports but play a game of shuttlecock. The gloomy, serious faces about him afflicted him sometimes, so that the tears sprang into his own eyes, but from the most secret depth of his boyish soul rose the dizzying, triumphal intoxication of victory. The morose and stiff-necked old men whom he had formerly feared and shunned, he had suddenly found humble and submissive. Sometimes at table, while they were sitting with their most anxious expression, he had audaciously filliped fruit seeds into their faces so as to see them laugh all at once, and then go away again and range themselves in a lugubrious ring around the queen dowager. The burning of the castle, with its adventures and dangers, had been for him a day of curiosity and excitement. It had even been almost the jolliest

day he had yet had in his life, though he himself did not dare to think so. The affright of the others and his grandmother's faintings had only made that wild spectacle the more strange and extraordinary. Now all the old life was done. The old king was dead, and his stronghold in ashes. All the new, all, all that Sweden longed for, should now mount on high with him like a flame of fire — and there he sat, lonesome and fourteen years old.

It seemed to him next that Nordenhjelm stood at the pulpit behind the speaker and dictated the words. Only for an instant had the minister shaken the clown's staff with bells so as to make himself intimate with his listeners. Then he addressed himself to the king in sight of all the congregation, earnestly, strictly, yes, even commandingly. He required him, in the name of God, not to let himself be led to vanity and pride by sycophants and hangers-on, but to dedicate his actions unselfishly to the unselfish people of Sweden, so that when, in the fullness of years, he closed his weary eyes, he might be followed by the blessings of thousands, and might enter into God's glory.

The voice of truth sang and thundered beneath the arches of the church, and a lump rose in the young king's throat. He tried afresh to link his thoughts to other, indifferent things, but every word struck his upright childish heart, and he sat with bowed head.

It was a relaxation for him when the carriage took him again to Karlberg. There he bolted himself into his apartments, and not even the resolute summons of the dowager could induce him to go down to table.

In the room outside his sleeping-chamber lay the books which were used in his rarer and rarer lesson-hours. Already he liked to philosophize over the riddles of creation, and he was always fascinated by the sciences, but he began to despise books like a merry troubadour intoxicated with life. The uppermost work dealt with geography, and, after turning the page back and forth, he threw it to one side. Then, vehemently and at random, he drew out instead the bottom book. With it he remained sitting.

It was broken at the corners and severely worn, and the contents was only a few manuscript pages with the evening prayers that he had learned to recite as a child. Many sentences and words had already been frozen out of his memory, but as he now saw the familiar lines before him, he needed only to read them through two or three times to know them by heart.

In the evening he ate only a cup of beer-soup, and the warders then began to undress him. He bore his violent emotions with such propriety that they only thought he was tired, and when they lifted the peruke from his short-clipped and dark-

brown, somewhat wavy hair, and he climbed up in his shirt into the great bed, he looked like a little girl.

The dog Pompey crept up by his feet, and below the foot of the bed a lighted candle was set in a basin of silver filled with water. The king was afraid of the dark, and it had therefore become the custom that the door to the outer room should be left open, and that a page or playmate should spend the night there. This evening, however, the king ordered with decision that the door hereafter should be closed. Only when they heard that did the warders begin to wonder and become uneasy, noticing that he was disturbed in spirit.

"Ah bah!" grumbled old Hakon, the faithful servant from his father's days, who obstinately continued to treat the king as a child. "To what shall that serve?"

"It shall be as I have said," answered the king. "And from to-morrow on the night-light is not necessary either."

The warders bowed as they went backwards from the sleeping apartment, but when Hakon had closed the door, he sat down on the threshold outside. One of the warders, who was named Hultman, also remained there standing. They heard how the king turned and threw himself on the mattress, and when Hakon finally stretched himself up to the keyhole, he saw indistinctly in the glimmer

of the night-light that his young lord was sitting upright in bed.

Gusts of the night wind roared and rattled out on the castle terrace and in the lindens of Karlberg Park, but within doors it was already hushed and still. Yet Hakon thought, to his wonderment, that he could distinguish a muffled, almost whispering human voice, and even detached words. He became attentive and listened.

He heard then that the king recited with half-raised voice the prayers he had taught himself to pray in his earliest childhood.

"Teach me to control myself and not to be misled by flattering talk to presumption and self-will, and thereby to sin against the regard which I owe to God and men."

Old Hakon brought his knees together and clasped his hands for prayer, and, through the stillness and the soft rustle of the blast, he heard continually the words of the king.

"Though the son of a king and hereditary heir to a mighty kingdom, I yet would always humbly consider that these things are a special grace and blessing of God, on which account I must strive after Christian virtues and knowledge, so that I may become skilful and worthy in so great a calling. Almighty Lord, Thou who dost raise up kings and put them down, teach me ever to obey Thy commands, so that I may never to my own ruin

and the oppression of others misuse the power that Thou lendest me. For Thy holy name's sake. Amen."

## *The Successor to the Throne*

HOW dull it was! How long were the days at the little court, where the black-clad councillors of state yawned in armchairs and stared in front of them, as if they pondered how it was that they were similarly shod on both feet, and had not a jack-boot on one and a silken slipper on the other. And so they yawned again—and out on the stairway the warders yawned, and down in the kitchen the cooks tasted the viands with their fingers in the grease, and said to one another: "Is that sour enough, so that the great gentlemen will at once make wry faces?"

The coachmen harnessed horses with black plumes and ribbons in front of black carriages. Black broadcloth was being cut out or sewed on all the tables. In the church on Grayfriars' Island, where the old king had been interred, the black canopies and tapestries still hung, and the king's funeral knell was heard far out into the country. When, finally, the coronation train moved forth over the snowy streets, all went in mourning, and only the young king wore his purple. The echo of the last festal salutes had hardly rolled over Tyskbagareberg, before the same intolerable dulness again settled over the throne in the dark Yuletide days.

Then, one sullen gray noon, the dowager's mas-

ter cook stamped on the floor. In his hands he held a pot with boiled tomatoes.

"*Ach, du Lieber!* There's something to do here today. His Grace, the Duke of Holstein, who is to be expected here shortly, has sent us a costly gift. Her Majesty and Mistress Greta Wrangel have already tasted the fruit, and Tessin, who is a travelled man, is coming down into the kitchen himself to advise us in the preparation. Don't stand there gaping, boys. Dishcloths to the saucepans! Rub and polish!"

The remote little court in the outermost corner of the world had that day gotten something to think of. At table the talk was of nothing else than the tomatoes, and each and all had something to say about their smell and flavor. Meanwhile there was drinking, and the old councillors who had been invited, growing mellow, forgot their intrigues and said drolly agreeable things to one another.

After the meal the king took Councillor Lars Wallenstedt by the coat-button, and led him along to the window recess, like a panting grumble-bear with a ring through its nose.

"Tell me," inquired the king earnestly, "how should a prince sacrifice himself for his people? That sermon of last spring never leaves my mind."

Wallenstedt had the habit when he talked of puffing out his lips as if he were saying "Pooh!"

Accustomed to the king's precocious and penetrating questions, he answered: "A prince should

sacrifice all small misgivings, gather all power to himself, become his people's archetype and will. That was truly a pious discourse we heard that time in church, but does not the Most Reverend Bishop Spegel say that subjects should be as thralls to their lord? The councillors and nobles now quarrel but for their share of the power since the time of Your Majesty's revered father. And Oxenstjerna and Gyllenstjerna and — ah, well — they have their ears to the ground. But it was for that reason I always ventured to support Your Majesty's will that even at your youthful years you should shift the heavy weight of government from the shoulders of Her Majesty the queen dowager."

When Cronhjelm, the king's tutor, who stood in the recess, heard the words about the weight of government, he wrote with his finger on the moisture of the window-pane: "The old woman feels that burden as deliciously light as her head-dress."

"Yes, yes, my dear Wallenstedt," the king meanwhile answered. "I, too, have always felt within me that my will urged me in that direction. On Atland's throne a man must sit. It is a wondrous troublesome thing to will. How is that? To-day I feel that I will ride to Kungsör and hunt bears. But why? I might equally well will something else. Will is to me a fetter, a chain drawn tight around my breast, from which I cannot twist myself free. It is the master, and I am the servant."

Wax candles were already lighted when he stepped into his outer apartment. On the table stood the sealed iron box in which the old king had deposited his final secret and fatherly instructions. Many days had elapsed since the retiring guardians of the realm had let it leave their hands, but he had not yet been able to bring himself to open the lid. One night, to be sure, he had violently torn off the seal, but he had then shrunk back. This evening he felt that the will was come.

But when he set the key in the rattling iron, his old fear of the dark fell upon him. He saw before him the old king's coffin of tin, on which had just fallen the spadefuls of earth, and it came over him that now he was to stand eye to eye with the dead. He called in Hakon, and bade him lay wood on the fire. Meanwhile he turned the key, threw back the lid, and with chilly trembling unfolded the closely written paper.

"Take the power into your own hand," stood there, "and beware of the great lords who are about you, of whom many have French stomachs. Those who chatter most eagerly hanker only after their own interests, and the best at times keep their own counsel."

When he had read to the end the anxious and mistrustful warnings of the departed, he did not notice that Hakon had left the apartment.

Now he was lord over all the land of Sweden.

The high dignitaries had thronged outside his door to declare him of age. Did they even know themselves whether their words were dictated by the hope of favor or by pure intentions? Did they not love him more than they did their own sons or brothers? But nevertheless he could not talk familiarly with these old men, who weighed and adjusted their speech. And could he talk with those of his own age, a crowd of shyly courteous playmates, who knew naught of the affairs of the day? Alone he went about as never before, and alone he had to carry the old king's sceptre. Nothing could be greater than Sweden, and of all Sweden's kings he willed to be the foremost and best. Had he not received a token of it from the hands of Almighty God, in that he was exalted to be a ruler so young, with the many years of a long life before him? The old, which had brought down the wrath of God, was now passed away. Song rose on high, there was jubilation of drums and trumpets.

He arose, and his hand fell with a light blow on the edge of the table.

Piper was right. Piper had said that Sweden was a great realm with a little court in a small town at the world's end. There was to be no more of that. He had himself set the crown upon his head, and had ridden to church with it. Had he not already received it from God at the hour of his birth, on the June morning when the glittering star of the

Lion's Heart ascended above the rim of the east? The floor-cloth on the streets, in which his horses' hoofs had beaten holes, he had given to the peasantry for clothing, but the nobles had had to go on foot, and the very councillors of state had borne his canopy and waited on him like warders. Why should he dissimulate, why should he confer honor on men whom he did not honor in his soul? Had he ever given a royal charter? The Estates, but not he, had had to take oath. His kingly vow he had sworn in silence before God, as he stood at the altar. Now, now was he lord over all the land of Sweden!

He went to the hanging mirror, eyed complacently the small pock-marks in his girlish skin, and compressed with his fingers the stern furrow in his brow.

Then he pointed into space, sat himself astride on a chair, and galloped around the room.

"Forward, boys, forward for your king! Jump, Brilliant, jump, jump!"

He imagined he was riding over a meadow against the enemy and that hundreds of bullets struck him on the breast, but fell flattened in the grass. Round about on the heights stood spectators, and at a distance the very king of France came on a white horse and waved his hat.

In the hall below, the old dignitaries still stood in conversation. When they heard the racket, they were still a moment and listened, but Cronhjelm

wrote in the moisture and grumbled half aloud: "That is only His Majesty who is occupied with the management of the realm. He is devising marks of favor for us in return for declaring him of age."

Wallenstedt blew out his lips and gave him a furious glance.

When the king had galloped all around his room, a sudden recollection struck him, and he went to the door.

"Klinckowström!" he cried, "Klinckowström, can you tell me why I have just now taken such a fancy for riding to Kungsör and hunting bears?"

Klinckowström, a merry page with red cheeks and a light tongue, answered: "Because it 's pitch dark and infernal weather, and because no bear is started, so that hunting is impossible. Shall I give orders for horses and torch-riders?"

"Have you any better suggestion?"

"All other suggestions are better, but—"

"No, you are right. We must ride to Kungsör just because it seems impossible, and because we will it."

When, a little later, the king rode down Queen Street, he passed close to a suburban place which extended below St. Clare's churchyard to a yellow-painted house. There an old widow known as Mother Malin kept an inn. The grounds were fenced in with boards, on which the builders at work on the castle, when in summer they emptied

their glasses at Mother Malin's, had painted arches of triumph and obelisks and dancing Italians. In one corner lay a pleasure-house having a fireplace and chimney. One window was on Queen Street, the other faced inward on plum trees and flower-beds, now covered with snow. For several weeks Mother Malin had daily carried food to the pleasure-house, but no one of her old customers knew anything with certainty as to the guest she lodged within. At a sale of a noble family, whom narrowed circumstances had bowed to the earth, she had purchased for her guest a piano, and in the evenings behind the closed shutters were heard strange melodies, accompanied by a weak and delicate voice.

Just as the king's torch-bearers approached, Mother Malin was standing at a crevice of the planks, looking out upon the dark street.

"It 's he himself," she burst out, and thumped on the door of the pleasure-house. "It 's the king that 's coming. Put out the light and peep through the heart in the shutter!"

At that moment the king dashed by in wild career.

"So handsome he is o' the cheeks, the gracious young lord!" she said, and went down again to her inn. "And pure and holy is his life, too. But why should he tempt God and set the crown on his head with his own hands? That 's why he slipped on the way, and the box of sacred ointment thudded on the floor of the church."

The night went by, and so did month after month. In the garden the chestnut trees became green again, as well as the plum trees behind the barberry and currant bushes. The Maypole was raised, and the court drove by to Karlberg.

Beside the king sat the Duke of Holstein, who had come to marry his sister, Princess Hedwig Sophia, and make an end of the intolerable dulness. As they drove past the pleasure-house, he happened by accident to throw a glance through the wide open window.

In the evening came a man with his cape-collar up, who knocked stealthily at the inn, but Mother Malin regarded him mistrustfully. "Be off to the devil with your cape-collar!" said she.

He laughed loudly and talked broken Swedish.

"I lie here on one of the German galleons, and would but have a mug of berry juice in your garden. *Schnell!*"

He thrust a couple of coins into her hand and pushed her aside. She was near to giving him a blow, but, as it was, she counted her money and thought things over. She put the mug of syrup on the earthen bench in the garden, but she herself sat behind the half-closed shutters to keep the new customer under her eyes.

He sipped a little at the juice, wrote with his heel on the sand, and looked about him. When he had sat awhile and thought himself unobserved, he

arose and turned down his collar. He was a young, handsome gentleman, of a daring and merry appearance, and he walked slowly along the path.

"Impudent villain!" muttered Mother Malin. "I vow he's going to knock at the door of the pleasure-house."

When the door remained shut, he shrank several paces aside to the open window, and stuck his hat under his arm in knightly fashion. Then he sat on the window-sill and spoke softly and eagerly.

With that Mother Malin's patience gave way, and she went out. She walked on the sand path, twisting a thread of yarn between her fingers and holding her head slyly bent forward. Meanwhile she meditated on the abuse which she should utter. But when she had gone a little way, the young gentleman flew from out the barberry hedge, and roared with the most disrespectful wrath, "Ha, you crone, march! I am the Duke of Holstein. But not a word of this!"

Mother Malin was so astonished that she could only turn completely around and smite herself on the knee. Again, when she went back into the house, she smote her knee, and could not comprehend that it was she, precisely, in her little abode, who had come to experience anything so great and extraordinary.

It then happened often in the bright, summer evenings, when the chestnuts stood without show-

ing a breath of wind, that the duke came to the place. The door of the pleasure-house was never opened, no matter how insinuatingly he rapped, but he sat on the window-sill; and Mother Malin, who had meanwhile got a shining ducat in her kirtle-pocket, served there both syrup and wine, and once even a raisin-cake, on which she had written with white of egg: "No prince on earth has nobler worth."

On this particular evening the duke tarried longer than at other times, and within the pleasure-house the piano sounded.

As he finally rose to go, he said: "Power, power? Why to be sure, all cry out for it. Why should you alone be silent? Consider that your father has played away his last sovereign. Adieu, adieu! If you fail with the lion, you bid fair next to hold the door open for the wolf."

The duke stood before the window. It was hushed and still, for down at the inn all had by now gone to bed.

"You do not answer," he continued. "Is it shyness? Then answer with a sign. One stroke on the piano means Yes, but if you trill with your little finger-tips it means No, irrevocably No."

He went lingeringly down the path. The night heavens were bright, the ground without shadow, and he felt about in a gooseberry bush without being able to find any fruit. Then a chord sounded

softly from the piano. He pressed his hat down on his head, drew his cloak about him, and hastened from the garden with cheerful steps.

After that night, Mother Malin went about in vain waiting to open the gate at dusk for the great lord. In ill humor, she began at last to draw from her pocket and count over the ducats, and she cursed herself because she had not at the right time known how to entice to her yet more.

Meanwhile, one evening, a barber's widow had been buried in the churchyard of St. Clare, and after the twelve torch-bearers had gone, two journeymen remained to keep watch. They sat on planks by the grave and spoke ill of the house of mourning.

"They ought to smart for it. The old hag lay covered in a cambric bonnet with crape ribbons, like a noble, and both spice-cakes and preserves stood on the table, but here to us they have n't even sent a stoop of small beer."

"I see across the wall that light is shining through the heart in Mother Malin's shutters. Should n't we go there and knock?"

They went out on the street to the yellow wooden house and thumped on the tin.

Mother Malin set one of the shutters ajar.

"You come just in the nick of time, lads," said she, when she recognized them. "No one has treats to offer in these days, but you can earn a pretty penny."

She pushed open the shutter still further and lowered her voice.

"Here you have each of you a whole Charles-piece. Yes, look at it, you noisy lads; it 'll stand taking hold of. Within here stands a royal page, who is soon coming down to you. At dawn, as usual, some night-cuckoos from the court are to ride by here. Pretend then to trip up and thrash the young gentleman, and afterwards take to your heels. That 's all."

"That seems right enough," said the journeymen, and thumbed the coins. "The hardest thing will be not to lay on in the excitement so that it cuts."

They went back to the churchyard gate and waited, and they heard Mother Malin whispering with the page up in the room.

The time grew long. A star flamed over the dead-house in the summer heat, the fire-watch called on Brunkeberg, and the dawn drew near.

There was a creaking and squeaking on Mother Malin's steps, and the page, walking with knees somewhat turned in and arranging the buttons of his coat, came down to the journeymen.

In the alley off Queen Street was heard roistering and trampling of horses. First rode Klinckowström, who was so drunk that he had to hold himself on by his horse's mane. Behind him could be seen the king, the Duke of Holstein, and some ten

other riders. All had blades in their hands, and all but the king were in only their shirts. He was mad with drink, and with his sword knocked in window-panes, lifted off signboards, and cut at wooden doors. There was no one now in the whole world whom he need obey. He could now do anything whatever that occurred to him, and no one would have a single word of reproach. Let them but dare! At supper he had struck the dishes from the pages' hands and thrown fragments of cake on his comrades' clothes, so that they had white marks as from snowballs. The intolerable old was now done with. The old men might yawn and clear their throats by their snuff-jars as they pleased. They had no longer anything to attend to but to be fools. He dedicated his old kingdom of bears to joy and the spirit of youth. The whole of Europe should be amazed. Now he was lord over all the land of Sweden!

Meanwhile the unknown page had laid himself on the ground in the churchyard gate, and the journeymen pinched and beat to their heart's content, and clutched at his throat.

"Who's there?" shouted the king, and set upon the journeymen, who straightway fled between grave-mounds and crosses. He was close at their heels, and stabbed one of them several times in the left arm, so that the blood dripped. At last, in defence, they lifted one of the planks by the half-

filled grave of the barber's widow. Then the king laughed and rode back to the wicket gate.

"One of ours?" he inquired of the unknown, who had picked himself up again. "What, are you so tipsy that you don't even know our password: Snuff on all perukes? No matter. Sit up behind our friend Klinckan, and hold him fast on his Wallach. Forward!"

Singing and hallooing, the shirt-clad band dashed on along street and hillside, waving and making long noses at the sleep-dazed folk who came to the gates. When the panes tinkled about Chief Marshal Stenbock, that most worthy old man went himself to the window in his dressing-gown and, bowing, began to lament that, at last, it was necessary for him to flee the realm. But the king tore his wig from him, and cut it in two halves with his sword.

"This is life!" shouted the Duke of Holstein. "Hats in the air! If we could only take along all the royal lady wooers who sit and peep in their bed-chambers. Wigs in the air! Rise in your stirrups and piddle over your horses' heads! Soho, boys! Devil take you. *Vivat Carolus*, king of Sweden and of scandals!"

Shirts were fluttering out; hats, wigs, and gloves lay on the street; hoofs struck sparks, and the horses rushed forward as in a fire.

When the wild riders had come back to the

castle, they sprang from their saddles, and let the horses run as best they could. Upon the stairs they broke the lampshades and fired pistol shots at a marble Venus.

"*Vorwärts!*" shouted the king, as he stormed with all his following into the chapel, and slashed amain at the pews. "They shall get splinters in their breeches here o' Sunday."

The duke pounded on the floor demanding silence, and Klinckowström, who had set to throwing dice in the circle of the altar, held his hand over his mouth so as to keep still.

"Dearly beloved listeners!" began the duke. "Nothing could make this earnest occasion more solemn than if my exalted and charming brother-in-law in this morning hour would give us, his faithful servants, a hint as to the choice of his heart. Let us speak of ladies that woo! Let us think of the baggage from Bavaria who scampered all the way hither with her sweet mother, though there was hardly any lodging for her after the castle was burned. Oohoo! says the owl. Only eight little tulip-red summers older than Your Majesty. Or of the Princess of Wurtemburg, who already showed her amorousness by paying suit to Your Majesty's father of most blessed memory, and who is sickly in the chest. Don't cough during the ceremony! Or of the Princess of Mechlenburg-Grabow, who with her mother is also supposed to be climbing into her

travelling-coach. Or of the Prussian princess, who is only two never-so-little sugar-grain years older; or the Danish princess, the tooty-tooty little pink-and-gold bird, who is only five small rose-leaf years older. All of them are bent upon wooing, and sprucing themselves up, and beautifying their pictures, because their love afflicts them full sore."

The king became abashed and replied, "Have I not always said that surely no man need think of being married before he is forty?"

As the duke noted his embarrassment, he winked at the page from the inn and pounded anew on the floor.

"Very good. His Majesty of Sweden will not parcel out his glory and the love of his subjects in anything else than manly courage and joy. Snuff on all wigs! Were I the monarch of the Swedes, I should therefore frighten the old fellows out of their wits by summoning the prettiest ladies and minxes to my festivities. *Potztausend!* They should sit before us on the saddle and stay with us till the cock crowed the third time. But, as if I would talk any longer! Set your knees to the pew-ends! Hey! Beat and break, snap and crack! Stamp on the floor!—*Herr Gott*, bring water! The king is sick. Water or wine—just wine—wine!"

The king had grown pale, and put his hand to his forehead. It was nothing to him that the others were flaming red and reeled about. At bottom, per-

haps, he loved none of them deeply. What did it matter if they called one another drunken? But never should any such thing be said of him, the chosen of God.

"That's enough now, boys!" he said, trying to thrust his sword into the scabbard, whereupon he noticed that he had lost it. Instead, therefore, he very calmly stuck the weapon through the skirt of his coat, and walked with resolute step toward the door.

The duke seized the unknown page by the arm, whispered, and made signs with his hands. The page hurried immediately after the king, opened the door for him, and followed him upstairs.

"Never shall I taste wine again!" thought the king. "I could not bear if people said that I stuttered in my speech and held pages to my breast. Why should I after that be respected more than they? And wine does not taste so much better than small beer. That depends on habit. A really wise man drinks water."

They went together along the stairs and corridors, and came, at length, to his sleeping apartment. Here Wallenstedt and a couple of other high nobles were already waiting. Wallenstedt puffed up his lips.

"Six o'clock in the morning," he began, "is the usual time for us to consider the affairs of government."

"If it concerns a criminal matter, yes," answered

the king; "otherwise I will receive no counsel, but will regulate and decide as seems to me right."

He did not pick up the poker, as did his father. He was as wakefully solicitous about his dignity as a nobly-born young lady about court propriety. Smiling and bowing, he went straight up to the gentlemen, so that they had to leave the room backwards.

"That is our return for setting a boy on the throne," they dinned maliciously into the ears of Wallenstedt.

The page, however, had already locked the door behind them with a subdued bang. That pleased the king. He stood leaning against the end of the high bed beside the casket in which his father had gathered together jewels and valuables of all sorts, and which had now been fetched up from the treasure-vault known as the Elephant.

"What is your name?" he asked the page. "Why don't you answer?"

The page breathed hard, fumbling and plucking at his clothes.

"Well, but answer me, boy! You know your own name, I suppose. You stand almost with your back to me so that I cannot see you."

The page now stepped forward into the middle of the room, lifted the peruke from his head, tossed it on the night-table, and answered: "My name is Rhoda— Rhoda d'Elleville."

The king saw that it was a very young girl with dark-pencilled eyebrows. Her yellow hair was crisply curled with a curling-iron, and a lightly shadowed line trembled around her mouth.

She sprang forward, threw her arms about his neck, and impetuously kissed him on the left cheek.

For the first time the youth of sixteen lost his self-command. Flames rose before his eyes, his cheek became grayish-white, and his hands hung impotent. He only saw that the page's coat was unbuttoned over the breast, so that lace was hanging from it. She continued to hold him fast in her arms, and pressed a long kiss upon his mouth.

He neither responded to it nor made resistance. He only raised his hands little by little and lifted her arms back over his head like a ring. Then, stammering, and bowing deeply and ceremoniously, he moved aside.

"Pardon, mademoiselle!" He scraped with his foot, clicked his heels, and, bowing again with each step, moved still further away. "Pardon, mademoiselle, pardon!"

How thoroughly had she not studied beforehand every word she meant to say! But now she remembered nothing. She spoke at random and without herself any longer knowing what she said.

"Mercy, sire! The good God may be excused if He punishes such presumption as mine."

She bent her knee to the carpet.

"I have seen you on horseback, sire; I have seen you from my window. In imagination I have seen you, before I made the long journey up here, have seen my hero, my Alexander."

At once he went forward to her, took her under the elbows, and conducted her in precocious cavalier fashion to a chair.

"Not so, not so. Sit, sit!"

She kept hold of his hand, and wrinkled her brow a little, as she looked him brightly in the eyes —and then she burst into a ringing laugh of relief.

"Ah, well, you are human after all, sire. Not a trace of the preacher. You are the first Swede I have met who understands that the eyes of virtue look inward and do not evilly squint at others. Your favorites drink and throw dice and pay attentions to women without your saying anything about it. You barely notice it. Let us speak of virtue, sire."

Perfume, the scent of her hair, of a woman, tortured him so violently that he was near to vomiting. The contact, the feel of her warm hand, nauseated him like touching a rat or a corpse. He believed himself offended and defiled both as the king, specially chosen of God, and as a man in that a stranger had touched his clothes and face and hands. Another, and that a woman, had taken hold of him as of a prey, a conquered captive. The person who had touched him straightway became an enemy,

with whom he wished to fight, whom he wished to strike down in punishment of lese-majesty.

"When I was yet but a child," she continued, "my confessor fell in love with me. He wrung his hands and strove with himself and babbled prayers, and I played with the madman and made a fool of him. Sire, how different you are from him! You never strive with yourself. You are wholly and completely indifferent, sire. That is all. Virtue with you is so innate that"—she laughed playfully—"I do not know if I can even call it virtue."

He tried to twist his hand free, and exerted his strength more and more. How had not the duke, the pages, and the warders dinned in his ears about lady wooers and pretty mamselles in the last weeks! Was this, too, a game behind his back? Should he, then, have no peace?

"Pardon, mademoiselle!"

"I know, sire, that for whole hours you can sit and turn over Tessin's etchings, and that you look especially at pictures with tall young ladies. That is perhaps only the esteem for art which you have inherited from your noble lady grandmother; but will it always remain so? I am no dead representation, sire."

Though bowing constantly, he now tore himself free with such vehemence that at the same time he jerked Rhoda d'Elleville up from the chair.

"No, you are a live page, mademoiselle, and the

*page* I order to go down into the chapel and send the comrades to the east anteroom."

She saw at once that the game was hopelessly lost, and the shadowed expression around her mouth became deeper and more weary.

"The page must obey," answered she.

When the king was left alone, he became again tranquil as before. Only at times there passed over his thoughts a flash of indignation. The unexpected adventure had chased the wine fumes from his head, and he wished not to go to rest like a weakling after the pranks of the night, but to continue them hour after hour.

He threw off his coat. In his shirt-sleeves, with sword in hand, he went out to his comrades in the east anteroom.

This room was sprinkled with dried stains of blood. The boards of the floor had been drenched and embrowned with pools of blood, and by the portraits on the wall, whose eyes were poked out, hung lumps of hair and of long-congealed blood.

In the room outside a lowing was heard. A calf was led in and brought forward to the middle of the floor.

The king bit his under lip so that it grew white, and with a single whistling blow struck off the calf's head. With blood oozing under his nails, he then threw the head through the broken window down on the passers-by.

Outside the door, meanwhile, the duke whispered hurriedly with Rhoda d'Elleville.

"So no one is likely to get my exalted brother-in-law out of his stiff-neckedness. Old Hjärne of the funny face talks of cooking a love potion, but that 's likely to be of little avail. Had he not inherited his father's coldness, he would with his bravado have become a Swedish Borgia. If he can't soon get to be a demi-god, he 'll become a devil. When such a bird does n't find flapping-room for its wings, it breaks apart the walls of its own nest. Hist! Some one 's coming. Don't forget! This evening at nine at Mother Malin's. Have on hand some figs and raisins!"

Behind them on the stairs came faithful old Hakon, leading two goats. He stood still, threw his hands aloft, and sighed anxiously:

"What have they made of my young lord? Never has such a thing been seen in the home of Sweden's kings. Almighty God, have pity and give us yet greater misfortune than before, because the quiet that has now come upon us can be borne neither by the Swedes nor by such a prince!"

## *Midsummer Sport*

TWO little girls stood in a pasture with a sieve, and near by, on a mossy stone, lazy and half-asleep, sat their brother, Axel Frederick, who to-day completed his twentieth year. His intended, the frightened little Ulrica, who had come to the place on a visit, bent down juniper twigs over the sieve and cut at them with her sickle. The little girls spread their hands to hold the twigs and help all they could, and melting snow dripped from the birches and alders.

"Oh, oh, even grandfather has come out in this heavenly weather," said Ulrica, pointing down at the great house.

The little girls then began to shout and hop. They took the sieve between them and went off to the great house, while they swung the sieve in time and warbled:

*The birds of springtime, they sing so well.*
*Come little goat-girls, come!*
*To-night we 'll have music and dance in the dell.*

On the other side of the fence, where the neighbor's land began, Elias, the farm-servant, brought down the last load of wood from the forest. The water dripped from his wooden shoes, and the two red oxen, Silverhorn and Yeoman, had sprigs of rowan in their yoke as a protection against witchcraft. Elias, too, began to join in:

*The birds of springtime they sing so light.*
*Come, my goat, oh, come!*
*The flowers will push through the turf to-night.*

But with that he broke off and, bending over the fence, said to Axel Frederick, "Powder smells ill when people shoot, and soot falls from the chimneys, so surely the thaw will last."

The entry of the great house was covered with a snowy thatch of turf, where in summer a goat was wont to browse among the house-leeks and lime-wort. Below on the bench sat grandfather in his gray frock coat with pewter buttons, and Ulrica led forward the little girls so that they might greet him. They were clad in basted-up smocks, which were home-dyed with whortleberry juice, and every time the little girls curtsied, they made lilac circles on the wet steps of the stairs.

Grandfather patted Ulrica on the cheek with the back of his hand.

"You will grow up in time no doubt, little one, and become a help to Axel Frederick."

"If I were only quite certain of it, grandfather. It is so big here, and there is so much to manage that I am not accustomed to."

"Ah, yes. And pity it is for Axel Frederick that he lost both father and mother so early, and had no one but his aunts and his old grandfather. But still we have looked after him in every way, and you, little one, must of course learn to take our place.

The hardest thing is his frail health, the fine boy. — Ah, dear children, God be thanked for this day of spring and for blessed years of peace!"

Grandfather felt of the cut juniper and praised it because it was moist, so that it would take up a great deal of dust.

Behind him in the kitchen window stood the two aunts, cooking a mash of castoreum and laurel berries for a sick heifer. Both of them had plain black clothes and ice-gray hair combed back.

"Why is n't Axel Frederick with you?" they asked of Ulrica. "Remember that for supper he is to have his favorite dish, honey-pudding dipped in syrup, and there is to be pork with shallot."

"Yes, yes," said grandfather; "and then let the servants have a rest for to-night."

Ulrica hastened into the maids' room, where the servants were picking tow, but she had not taken many steps before her timid and undeveloped little face again took on an anxious and listening expression.

"But, Ulrica!" called grandfather. "I don't understand this, Ulrica! Come here, Ulrica!"

She hung the bunch of keys she had just taken up behind the door-post in the entry, and went out.

"Is n't that a rider coming off there?" asked grandfather. "Three months now I've been spared from letters. I grow so full of dread when I get a

letter. Look at him, look at him! He digs his paw into his bag."

The rider came to a standstill a moment by the steps, and delivered a sealed and folded paper.

The aunts elbowed their way forward on both sides of grandfather, and reached him his spectacles, but his hands trembled so that he could hardly break the seal. They all wanted to read the writing at the same time, and Ulrica forgot herself so far that she leaned over grandfather's arm, pointed along the lines, and spelled aloud before the others.

At last she struck her hands together and stared in front of her, while tears mounted to her eyes.

"Axel Frederick, Axel Frederick!" she cried, and ran over the sanded court to the pasture. "For heaven's sake!"

"What the mischief is the matter with you now?" answered Axel Frederick, throwing away the withered fern which he was chewing. He had a full, pink face and an agreeable, careless voice.

She did not come to a halt before she had taken his hand.

"Axel Frederick, you don't know! There's an order that the regiment shall hold itself in readiness to gather under the flag. It's on account of the Danes' invasion into Holstein."

He followed her back to the great house, and she squeezed and squeezed his wrist.

"Dear children," stammered grandfather, "that I must needs live to see such a visitation! We have war upon us."

Axel Frederick stood and pondered.

Finally he looked up and answered, "I won't go."

Grandfather tramped around on the steps, and about him the aunts went back and forth.

"You are already enrolled, dear child. The only thing would be if we could perhaps hire some one else."

"One can surely do that," replied Axel Frederick indifferently.

He went into the house, and Ulrica sprang up the stairs with her apron before her eyes, and threw herself on her bed.

In the evening, when the honey-pudding was eaten, and they all sat around the table, grandfather wanted, as usual, to work on a hundred-mesh net, but he trembled too much.

"It has gone ill up there in Stockholm," said he. "Ballets, masquerades, streets covered with carpets, comedians and conjurers of all sorts — that has been the daily food with our new 'King Christina.' I've heard all about it. When the money ran out, he began to give away the crown jewels. Now our gracious lord must spell out another lesson."

Axel Frederick moved back his candlestick, and sat leaning indolently forward with his elbows on

the table, while the aunts and Ulrica, her eyes red with weeping, cleared the table. Grandfather nodded and coughed and went on with his talk.

"In all these years of peace there has been nothing but greed and extortion, and the very worst fellows have pushed themselves nearest to the throne. Now these fatted oxen are behaving ill, I fancy. Ha-ha! You should but have seen the old times when grandfather was young, and was called to the nobles' banner. The king's standard that was kept in the royal wardrobe was unfurled, and the horse with the kettledrum was equipped in its long saddle-cloth with crowns in the corner, and then we assembled in our tight, braided coats, while the trumpets began to play."

Grandfather took the yarn and tried to tie it, but threw it aside again and rose.

"You should only have seen, Axel Frederick. Even in the moonlight, as we stood drawn up on the icy ground and sang psalms before the advance, I recognized the Närkingers' red uniforms with white facings, which were like striped tulips; and the yellow Kronobergers, and the gray boys from Kalmar, and the gay blue Dalecarlian regiment, and the West Gotlanders, who were yellow and black. That was a feast to behold, but quiet as in the Lord's house. Well, there have come other men and other coats. Everything now is to be severe and simple."

There was silence in the room awhile.

After that Axel Frederick said, as if to himself, "If my togs and gear were in good order, there might be merry times in a camp."

Grandfather shook his head.

"You are frail in health, Axel Frederick, and it will be hard to march down through the whole kingdom to Denmark."

"Yes, march I won't, but I might, though, have Elias with me and the brown long-wagon."

"That you may of course have any time, but you have no cloth tent with stakes and ridge-tree and pegs and whatever else there ought to be now."

"Elias could very well purchase that for me on the way. As to uniform, I 'm passably well off."

"Let 's see now, let 's see now." Grandfather became eager and toddled off over the floor to open the wardrobe. "Ulrica, come here, Ulrica, and read how it stands there in His Royal Majesty's" (he bowed) "edict which lies on the table! Here we have the cloak with brass buttons, lined with smooth Swedish baize. That is right. And the vest is here, too. Read now about the coat!"

Ulrica trimmed the tallow candle, and sat down at the table with hands over her brow, while she read monotonously, spelling out the words, in a loud voice: "Coat of blue unstretched cloth, red collar, lined with madder-red baize, twelve brass buttons in front, four above and three below the

pocket-flap, and one button on each side, three small on each sleeve."

"Eight—twelve—that's right. Now we come to the breeches."

"Breeches of good buckskin or deerskin with three buttons covered with chamois."

"They are fearfully chafed. There will soon be eyes in the seat. However, Elias could very well see to getting you a new pair on the way. But the hat and gloves. Where are the hat and gloves?"

"They're lying in the chest in the entry," said Axel Frederick.

Ulrica read: "Gloves with large gauntlets of yellow shamozed ox-leather, stiffened and reinforced, with the grip of buck- or goat-skin. Shoes of good Swedish wax-leather with straps cut in one piece. Bottom of an insole and a middle-sole. Shoe-buckles of brass."

"The shoes and wax-leather boots are here, and are fairly good. You can have my spurs. You shall be a fine-looking Swedish soldier, my dear boy."

"Neckcloth: one of black Swedish wool-crepon two-and-a-half feet long and a full nine inches wide with a leather cord half a yard long at each end, and two of white."

"That Elias must get for you at Örebro."

"Pistols: two pairs. Holsters of black leather with tops of gathered broadcloth."

"You must take mine. And my broadsword is in

excellent condition with calf-skin sheath and sword-band of elk-leather. That 's how a Swedish warrior ought to look. We must now think, too, of equipping Elias and putting in haversacks and all."

Axel Frederick stretched his arms.

"It 's surely the best thing for me to go up and lie down and take a good rest beforehand."

There was now noise and commotion in the great house. There was nailing and battering every day, there was flaming and sputtering in the fireplace, and by night the candle was burning. The one room that stayed dark was Axel Frederick's.

On the last night no one but Axel Frederick went to rest, and when the dawn had come on so far that all lights could be put out, the aunts waked him and gave him something warm to drink in bed with drops of *aqua fortis*, for they had heard that he coughed in the night.

When he came down into the hall, the others were gathered there already, even the maids and the men-servants, and the table was spread for all in common. They ate without saying a single word, but when the meal was over, and they arose, the Bible was brought to grandfather, and Ulrica read with choked voice. When she had ceased, grandfather clasped his hands and spoke with eyes closed:

"Like as my forefathers have done, even so will I now in the hour of departure lay my hands upon

you, my daughter's son, and bless you, for many are my years, and who knows when the hour-glass has run out? God, the Most High, I invoke from my lowly dwelling, that He may lead you to honor, and that the heavy trials which await us may only exalt our little nation to be greater and more glorious."

Axel Frederick stood at the corner of the table, fingering and balancing the plate, until from outside was heard a clatter, as the brown long-wagon was driven up.

All now went out, and Axel Frederick sat up beside Elias, wrapped in grandfather's wolf-skin coat and much heated, for in the spring weather the water was dripping from roof and tree.

"Here is the butter firkin," said the aunts, "and here the bread sack. Hearken now, Elias! In the seat-box are the curd-cake and the flask with the *aqua fortis*. If the strain and peril are too hard, dear Axel Frederick, never forget that the way home is short."

But grandfather pressed in among them and stuck his hands down in the back of the wagon.

"Is the chest tied on right? And let's see now! Here is the sprinkling-brush and the whisk-cloth and the scraper—and here we have the fodder-bag and the water-bottle. That's as it ought to be. The lead-mould, bullet-cutter, and casting ladle are in the chest."

Ulrica stood behind them without any one noticing her.

She said very softly, "Axel Frederick, when it is summer, I shall go out some evening and bind joy-threads and sorrow-threads on the rye, to see which has grown highest the next morning—"

"Now it's all ready," broke in grandfather, who had not heard her; "and God be with both you and Elias!"

Round about on the side of the road stood the farm-folk and the day-laborers.

But just as Elias raised his whip, Axel Frederick laid his hand over the reins.

"This journey may turn out ill," said he.

"Still it would look badly," answered Elias, "to unharness and unsaddle now."

Axel Frederick stuck his hand back into the sleeve of his coat, and between the lines of silent people the wagon rolled away.

. . . . . .

The weeks passed, and the trees blossomed. It was a slow march with the Närke regiment through the wilds of Sweden, and Axel Frederick sat in his coat and slept beside Elias, warm on the brow and with his gloves of goat's-hair very moist. A little way from Landskrona, the brown long-wagon had fallen behind the regimental baggage, and the horse stood in the blaze of the sun, and browsed beside

the ditch. Both master and man fell asleep, shoulder to shoulder.

The horse whisked at a gad-fly, the water purled in the ditch, and a couple of vagrants threw their bad language at the sleepers; but they continued to sit in the same untroubled repose.

Then there came behind them at a gallop a shabbily dressed rider with a large flaxen peruke, who pulled up his horse beside the wagon.

Elias nudged Axel Frederick, and picked up the reins, but Axel Frederick, unwilling to open his eyes, only said: "Yes, drive on, Elias! I need to get a good rest before my hardships."

Elias gave him another nudge in the side.

"Rouse yourself, rouse yourself!" he whispered.

Drowsily Axel Frederick opened one eye — but in that instant he grew blood-red over all his face, he rose, and saluted from the middle of the wagon.

He recognized at once from pictures that it was the eighteen-year-old king himself. Yet what a transformation! Was this majestic and commanding youth, who had grown up so quickly, the same that a few months before beheaded calves and broke windows? He was not above middle height, and his face was small; but the brow was high and noble, and from the large deep-blue eyes beamed an enchanting radiance.

"The gentleman should throw off his coat, so

that I can inspect his uniform," he said deliberately. "The earth is green long since."

Axel Frederick panted and struggled to get off his grandfather's accursed pelisse, and the king surveyed coat and buttons, fingered them, pulled at them, and counted.

"That is fair," said he with a precociously earnest expression; "and now we shall all become entirely new men."

Axel Frederick stood dazed and erect, looking fixedly at the wagon wheel.

Then the king added slowly, "In a few days we may perhaps have the fortune to stand before the enemy. I have been told that in battle nothing is as hard as thirst. If the gentleman should some time meet me in the tumult of the strife, let him step forward and lend me his drinking-flask."

The king once more gave his horse the spurs, and Axel Frederick sat down. He had never loved or hated, never been worried or carried away with enthusiasm, and he pondered the king's words.

The pelisse came to lie between him and Elias. When at dusk the wagon clattered into Landskrona, the regiment had already pitched their tents. Axel Frederick looked about for the covered drinking-table of which he had dreamed. Instead he found only taciturn comrades, who pressed one another's hands, and looked away in crowds across the Straits of Öresund, where the waves were rushing under

the cloudy summer heavens, and where flags and pennons fluttered over the forest of masts of the Swedish fleet.

Next morning Elias put the horse and wagon into a barn, because the Crown had taken over all vessels, and only on the day after the fleet had sailed could he follow on a fishing-boat to Zeeland. He remained standing on the shore, almost out in the water, when the monstrous anchors, dripping with mud, were hoisted up by the creaking cables. On mast after mast rose the swelling sails, and the sunlight glittered on the lanterns and glass windows of the poops. The billows danced and shot by, mirroring in flaming coils the lofty, swaying forms of the galleons, which with their laurel garlands and tridents pointed out across the sea to the unexplored land of wonder, toward adventure and achievement. The masses of cloud, after resting long on the waves, had sunk into the sea, and the atmosphere was blue as in a saga.

Then the king forgot himself; the boy in his soul conquered so that he began to clap his hands. He stood in the poop just in front of the lantern, and around him the gray-haired warriors of his father's time smiled, and also began to clap. Even His Excellency Piper sprang up the ladder as nimbly as a ship's-boy. There were no longer any old and decrepit men or greedy bickerers; it was an army of youths.

As if at a mysterious sign, music and drums began to sound at the same moment, swords flew from their sheaths, and, rising above Admiral Anckarstierna's words through the speaking-trumpet, a hymn was sung from the nineteen warships and the hundred smaller vessels.

Elias recognized Axel Frederick, who sat on grandfather's pelisse, hemmed in by the cargo of gabions, sacks for earth, and trench entanglements. But when Elias saw that he, too, slowly rose and drew his blade like the others, and saw how the fleet gradually vanished on the water, he passed his hand over his eyes, shaking his head.

He returned toward the barn, muttering, "How will he look after himself with his fragile health till I can catch up?"

A few days afterward Elias came alone with his long-wagon on the Småland roads. Peasant women, who recognized him from the time he had driven past with the sleeping officer, set their entry doors ajar, and asked if it was true that the Swedes had landed at Zeeland, and that the king had thanked God on his knees for the victory, but had stammered from embarrassment.

He nodded assentingly without replying.

Day after day he drove northward, step by step, walking with the reins the whole way beside the wagon, which was covered with a piece of an old sail.

When at last, one evening, he came to the hedge in front of the great house, all immediately recognized by the noise that it was the brown long-wagon, and the horse neighed. Amazed, they went to the window, grandfather himself came out on the steps, and Ulrica stood in the middle of the courtyard.

Elias walked as slowly as ever with the reins in his hands, and at the steps the horse stood still of itself.

Then Elias carefully drew the sail from the wagon, and there stood a long, narrow, nailed-up coffin, with a yellowed wreath of beech-leaves on the lid.

"I brought him home with me," said Elias. "He received a shot in the breast as he sprang forward and handed His Royal Majesty his drinking-flask."

## *Gunnel the Stewardess*

IN a vault of the fortress at Riga, Gunnel the stewardess, an old woman of eighty, sat and spun. Her long arms were veinous and sinewy, her breast was lean and flat like an old man's. Some thin white wisps of hair hung down over her eyes, and she had a cloth knotted about her head like a round cap.

The spinning-wheel whirred, and a trumpeter lad lay on the stone floor in front of the fire.

"Grandma," said he, "can't you sing something while you are spinning? I've never heard you do otherwise than nag and scold."

For a brief moment she turned towards him her tired and wickedly chilling eyes.

"Sing? Perhaps of your mother, who was set on a wagon and carried to the Muscovites? Perhaps of your father, whom they hanged at the chimney of the house on the bridge? Curse will I the night when I was born, and myself will I curse and every human being I have met. Name me a single one who is not even worse than his repute."

"If you sing a song, you'll be cheerful, grandma, and I should be so glad to have you cheerful, this evening."

"He whom you see playing or laughing is only a master of deception. Misery and shame is all,

and it is for the sake of our sins and our baseness that now the Saxons have come and besieged our city. Why don't you go in the evening and do your duty on the wall as at otherwhiles, instead of lying here in your laziness?"

"Grandma, can't you say a single pleasant word to me as I go?"

"Thrash you I should, if I were not so infirm and bent with my years that I no more can lift my countenance to heaven. Do you not want me to tell your fortune? Do they not call me the Sibyl? Shall I tell you that the crooked line over your eyebrows signifies an early death? I see years ahead into the future, but as far as I see I find only evil and low purposes. You are worse than I, and I am worse than my mother, and all that which is born is worse than that which dies."

He arose from the floor and stirred the logs.

"I will tell you, grandma, wherefore I sat myself by you this evening, and wherefore I asked of you a kindly word. The old governor-general has ordered to-day that before the following night all women, young and aged, sound and sick, shall go their way, so as not to consume the bread of the men. Those who refuse shall be punished with death. How can you, who in ten years have never gone further than across the castle courtyard to the storehouse, now be able to range about in wood and waste in the midst of the winter cold?"

She laughed and trod the spinning-wheel faster and faster.

"Haha! I have been waiting for this after I tended so faithfully the noble lord's storeroom and all that was his. And you, Jan? Aren't you worried at having no one any longer to bake for you at the oven and make your bed on the folding-bench? What other feeling is there in children? Praised be God, be God, Who at the end casts us all under the scourge of His wrath!"

Jan clasped his hands about his curly brown hair.

"Grandma, grandma!"

"Go, I tell you, and let me sit in peace and spin my tow, till I open the door myself and go out of it to be quit of this earthly life!"

He took a few steps forward toward the spinning-wheel, but thereupon turned about and went out of the vault.

The spinning-wheel whirred and whirred, until the fire burned out. Next morning, when Jan the trumpeter came back, the vault stood empty.

The siege was long and severe. After divine service had been held, all the women went out of the city in the snowy days of February, and the feeble or sick were set upon litters and wagons. All Riga became a cloister for men, who had nothing to give to the flocks of begging women that now and then stole out in front of the wall. The men had scarcely bread for their own necessities, and the starved

horses tore each other to pieces in the stalls, or devoured the mangers, and gnawed great holes in the wooden walls. Smoke hung over the burned suburbs, and at night the soldiers were often wakened by warning tocsins, and took down their broadswords from the ceiling.

In the evenings, however, when Jan the trumpeter came home to the vault which he and his grandmother had had as a living-room, he almost always found the folding-bench made up as a bed, and a bowl with mouldy meat beside it on a chair. He was ashamed of saying anything about it to the others, but he was really terrified. He believed that his grandmother had perished in the snowdrifts, and that now, remorseful over her former hardness, she went about again without rest. In his fright he shook as with ague, and many a night he preferred to sleep hungry in the snow on the wall. After he had strengthened himself with prayer, however, he became easier, and finally he felt himself more surprised and anxious when he now and then found the folding-bench untouched and the chair empty. Then he would seat himself at the spinning-wheel and, treading it very softly, would listen to the familiar whirring which he had heard day after day since his birth.

Now it happened one morning that the governor-general, the celebrated Erik Dahlberg, a man of seventy-five, heard violent shooting. He rose with

impatient anger from his sketches and fortification models of wax. As a reminder of his bright youthful excursions in the service of beauty, splendid etchings of Roman ruins hung on the wall, but his formerly mild countenance had become wrinkled with melancholy, and an expression of harshness stiffened around the narrow, compressed, almost white lips. He adjusted his great spliced wig, and tremblingly ran his nails over his thin moustache. When he went down the stairs, he struck heavily on the stones with his cane, and said:

"Ah, we Swedes, we blood-kindred to the Vasa kings, who in their old age could only find fault and quarrel and at the last sat in their own rooms afraid of the dark,—we have in our soul a black seed, from which with the years is raised a branching tree filled with the bitterest gall-apples."

He became bitterer and harsher in spirit the farther he went, and when he finally stood at the wall, he spoke to no one.

Several battalions had been drawn up with flags and music, but afterwards the shooting had quieted, and through the gate returned scattered bands of weary and bleeding men who had just repulsed the enemy's attack. Last of them all, came a thin and feeble old man, who had himself a red sabre wound on the breast, but who painfully carried in his arms in front of him a wounded boy.

Erik Dahlberg raised his hand over his brows to

look. Was not the fallen boy Jan the trumpeter, the lad from the castle? He recognized him by his curly brown hair.

At the arch of the gate the exhausted bearer sank down against the stone pillar, and remained there sitting with his wound and with the dead boy on his knee. Some soldiers, bending down to examine the wound, slit up the bloody shirt above the breast.

"What!" they shouted, and stepped back. "It's a woman!"

Wondering, they bent down still lower to look at her face. She had sunk her head sidewise against the wall, and the fur cap slid down, so that the white locks of her hair fell forward.

"It's Gunnel the stewardess, the Siby!!"

She breathed heavily and opened her dulling eyes.

"I did n't want to leave the boy alone in this world of evil, but after I had put on men's clothes and served night and day among the others on the wall, I thought that I was eating a man's bread without wrong."

Soldiers and officers looked dubiously at Erik Dahlberg, whose commands she had transgressed. He continued to stand there, reserved and harshly gloomy, while the stick in his hand trembled and tapped on the stone paving.

Slowly he turned to the battalion and the thin lips moved.

"Lower your colors!" he said.

## *French Mons*

A HIDE–COVERED field wagon had stuck in one of the swamps of Poland, and the horse had already been unhitched. On the wagon stood a young man who had just come to the army to work his way up. His comrades called him French Mons, because as tutor he had followed some distinguished lords to France, and had there filled his chest with all sorts of odd things. Captain Olof Oxehufvud and several subalterns and soldiers waited alongside in the mud, and the snowstorm struck them in the face.

"The wagon and chest must be left behind," said Oxehufvud.

French Mons opened the chest, and pulled out as much as he could carry.

"What a pied dressing-gown with all that needlework and tassels!" exclaimed Oxehufvud and the subalterns. "What miserable little slippers! And false calves! And a bonnet!"

"That 's a *cadeau* from ma—"

"Kick it into the slush!"

"—From mama."

"Look at the little peruke!"

"And the medium peruke!"

"And the great spliced peruke!"

Oxehufvud could now control himself no longer, but took him by the leg.

"Kick the damned stuff into the slush, I say!"

The delicate blonde countenance of French Mons flamed up, and he struck his hand on his sword.

"Master Captain, such an import—"

"Such an important person as you can freely hold up the march, you think?"

"No. Such a victorious army, I would say, surely need not go in shabby clothes, with dressing-gowns from the time of King Orre."

"Stuff and nonsense! Little schoolmaster! Consummate ass!"

"The captain treats me like a menial, yet I have had education, have travelled in France, yes, have stood eye to eye with Vauban himself."

"Well, what did Vauban say?"

"What did he say?"

"Just so."

"'Get out!' he said, for it was at his own gate, and I was in his way."

"Lord! Lord! Get down from the wagon and be quick about it! Come here, two of you fellows, and take this beggar in lady's chair style!"

French Mons rolled up the slippers and wigs in the dotted dressing-gown and took it on his back, while he held a lorgnette before his eyes.

When he had been carried to the bank, Oxehufvud stood in front of him, tall and slim, with brilliant red cheeks and small dark moustaches.

"Hark now, monsieur, what do you want in the field? Do you want to work up?"

"Though not of noble rank, I aspire to it. Who knows if perhaps even I may not sit some time with a certificate of nobility in my pocket?"

"You may ennoble yourself in fools' hell! In this army no one says a word about nobility, but every one must work his way up the best he may."

Oxehufvud had now abused him so long as leader that his comradely heart began to thaw, and he added grumblingly in a somewhat milder tone, "Behave yourself gallantly, and you may get your officer's commission to start with! We have already broken so many Swedish dandies of your sort and made men of them. There by that little wood you see a large house with a white stairway. Since we are in all no more than five-and-twenty men, I can't afford to leave you a single soldier. Reconnoitre and spy diligently on the enemy, so that no one falls on us from the rear!"

Oxehufvud marched off with his little band, and French Mons went up to the house with his bundle on his back.

No human being was visible, and he stationed himself irresolutely in the lee of the wall. He was cold and wet through, but above all he was troubled by the dirt and mud on his boots. Would he not be able to keep equally good watch from one of

the windows? A well-made bed with a silken coverlet and a foot-muff was exactly what he longed for.

Transversely under the house went a dark carriage-door, and thither with great caution he slunk along the wall. When he had dried his moist lorgnette, he leaned forward and looked in with stealthy alertness.

There was a stamping and clattering, and he distinguished two gleaming eyes. With throbbing heart he took a step back and drew his sword. A black horse rushed out and ran back and forth in the courtyard, while it threw the snow high in the air with its hind feet.

"I won't catch that black fellow," thought French Mons. "If a soldier sits on such a wild horse, the dead owner will rise from the swamp, jump up behind, and pull him from the saddle. They tell of such things in the evening by the camp-fire."

He threatened the horse with his sword, and went in, pushing the door open on the other side so that the light would be better. He saw now that the door to the house was walled up.

Snorting and stamping, the horse came back, but French Mons chased him out again. Then he went out and called up to the window. A gray-haired serving-woman stuck out her head.

"Does a friend of King Stanislaus or of the Saxon drunkard dwell here?" he asked.

"Here dwells an old recluse, who is no one's enemy and no one's friend."

"Good. Then he cannot deny shelter to a frozen Swedish soldier."

The serving-woman vanished and finally returned after a time with a ladder, on which he climbed in.

The room was large, and the ugly but clean wooden chairs stood in a stiff row along the bare walls. When he chanced to push back one of the chairs with his scabbard, the serving-woman hastened at once to move it back to its proper place. Two girls dressed in blue, with pale faces and curled hair, came and went without saying a word. As soon as one got a few steps behind, she ran anxiously forward to the other's side. They rubbed against each other and groped with their long fingers, and though it was still bright daylight, they carried two lighted lamps.

When the serving-woman had rubbed the mud from his boots and sufficiently dried the wet places that the soles had made on the floor, she quietly and carefully opened the door to the next room.

"Don't walk too roughly!" she whispered.

There stood a man of middle age in a dressing-gown and with the most impudent and pointed nose, but no one had ever worn a more elegantly curled peruke, and on his white fingers gleamed rings with jewels.

French Mons set down his bundle, and eyed him

with his lorgnette. Much pleased with his venerable exterior, he thereupon made a wide gesture with his arms, and bowed to the floor.

"My intentions are courteous," he said, "and humbly I beg the favor of knowing with what nobleman I have the good fortune to speak."

"Sit down, my good sir. I am nothing but a forgotten old recluse, but since you are a man of quality, I shall at once explain various things that may seem remarkable."

The two gentlemen sat down stiff and straight with hands on their knees.

"Formerly I was a merry companion, and my coat of brocade was the talk of all Warsaw, but on my thirtieth birthday, when I sat drinking with my comrades, I lifted my glass and spoke somewhat in this fashion: My friends, with every year your eyes become harder and your hearts more shrunken. One believes in King Stanislaus of the white cheeks, and the other in King August with the big belly. Afterwards you forge your plots accordingly, and seek for appointments and rewards. I will not go to the grave with the horrible recollection that each of my brothers was at the last a Cain. I set friendship much higher than love, because it is a bond exclusively between souls, and therefore to-day I say unto you farewell, while we are all still young. Of me you shall never hear anything further, but such as I now see you, you shall still go about me

in my room before my eyes and keep me company, when I sit alone and old. When the serving-woman outside the door hears that I prattle half aloud, she will say: 'Now the old man is talking with the friends of his youth.'"

"And after you had so bade them farewell?"

"Then I went home and had the door walled up. My servants have to get themselves out and in as best they may."

"With a host of such delicate sensibilities a guest will surely get on well."

"Get on well? What are you thinking of? My twin daughters who walk about the room here with their lamps are insane. Their mother was an abducted nun. No, a guest would not get on in the least."

"You mean, perhaps, that my coming disturbs."

"Ah well, I won't exactly say that. But there are ghosts here."

His nostrils rose at the corners, and he got up and rubbed his hands in satisfaction.

"I consider it my duty as host to tell the truth as well first as last. There is a dead lackey who goes about again, and whose name is Jonathan. He stands in window-recesses and behind doors in brown livery with black braid. His servant zeal so sticks to the poor fellow even after death that he watches over and serves guests when they least expect it. Fortunately guests are rare here. Tell me, are you a count?"

"I? No."

"Are you a baron?"

"No, I 'm not a baron yet."

"Are you not at least a plain nobleman?"

"Is it my lord's intention to insult?"

French Mons flushed with embarrassment. "The certificate has been my dearest dream," he thought, "and would to God I carried it already in my coat pocket. Then no one any longer should cry, 'Little schoolmaster!' Then it should be: 'I saw the marks of nobility on that man long before he got his certificate.'"

"How can such a simple question wound you?" exclaimed the recluse, with yet more enjoyment.

"Of course I am noble. My family is extremely old."

"That would be another thing. That 's very good. Though Jonathan had a Christian burial and all that, he is such an out-and-out aristocratic lackey that he starts all sorts of malicious tricks as soon as he has before him a parvenu or a plebeian."

French Mons stroked his small moustache with the nail of his little finger and swung his lorgnette uncomfortably.

"Is my lord a connoisseur of Syracusan wine?" he asked.

"No."

"I too think much more of a glass of Frontignac. My favorite dish is ragout with mushrooms,

though I shall never speak ill of a *haché* of lamb with thyme. Much in this part of the world depends on the sauce. Oh, I do not long to be back home with oatmeal and pitchy darkness."

"Pitch darkness? Are you thinking of the summer nights?"

"They are bright."

"And winter evenings are bright, too, for then you have snow. If you are afraid of pitch darkness, never travel southward again! Have you in your land any great artists and scholars?"

"We have not and never shall have."

"You do not over-value your countrymen."

"I have seen a little of the great world, my lord. I have travelled in France a good two months, my lord. I have even been a whole evening with *roi Soleil*."

"You? Have you been with Louis XIV?"

"That I have — at the theatre — though I only got a wretched standing-place in the parterre. Since Augustus there has not lived so majestic a sovereign. Only look at his style of bowing!"

"The king of Sweden is a man, too."

"That he is, for he makes us noticed in foreign countries, but how poor for all that!"

"Mightily poor in Warsaw lately. When Stanislaus stepped into the church for coronation with his spouse, who is always frightened and tremulous, he not only got as a present from the Swedes the

newly wrought crown, sceptre, apple, sword, ermine, belt, and shoes, but also a banner, tapestries on the church walls, the plates on the table, coronation money to be scattered about, and soldiers who kept guard and fired the jubilation salute — and at the last he thanked His Excellency Piper and kissed his hand. — Are you poor yourself?"

"Poor? I?"

French Mons thought of the two wretched Charles-pieces that were sewed under the lining of his coat, and were all he possessed, but he rapped his lorgnette on the table and hastened to say: "My expenses are enormous — and play amuses me — I never go without ten louis d'or in my purse."

"Will you lend me five louis d'or?"

French Mons looked up at the ceiling.

"Just to-day, unluckily, I forgot my purse in a coat on my tent-post. But I shall deem myself happy to have the trifle sent you at the first opportunity. My lord, do not regard us awkward Swedes as any *grands seigneurs*. However high I mount, still Mons always peeps out between the seams."

"You were mightily awkward lately at our Polish election, when Arvid Horn sat with his note-book and registered all who voted against the Swedish orders, and when our land-marshal broke his staff in despair. — But now consider my house as your own. The tobacco pipe lies by the flask of scented water, the scented water on the powder-box, the

powder-box on the tobacco keg, the tobacco keg on the commode. That you must hunt out as time goes on."

With these words he took up a leather-bound book and sat down to read.

"I beg you to trouble yourself no further," answered French Mons, looking at him sidelong through his lorgnette with wakening mistrust. Within his soul he thought: "Just wait till I'm sitting with my certificate in my big state carriage! Then it will be: 'That gentleman is our newly made knight, Magnus Gabriel.'"

The two girls every now and then pattered past through the room, and threw the light of their lamps upon him, and every time he rose and bowed. As the recluse meanwhile continued to read and gradually appeared to forget his presence entirely, he finally took his bundle and went back into the outer room.

"It's getting dark," he said to the serving-woman, "and I am too tired to keep company longer."

"We have arranged the gentleman's bed here to the left in the great hall. That is the only room that has a fire."

The hall was whitewashed and long, with inhospitable rows of chairs and a couple of rough folding-tables. Just by the door stood a bed with curtains of Holland linen. The old woman lighted the four candles in the sconces and left him alone.

Chilled, he looked about him and laid his sword on the table. Then he unpacked his bundle. Three of the candles he blew out, and on them hung the little peruke and the medium peruke and the spliced peruke, but with the fourth he threw the light under the bed and in the window recesses and then set it back in the socket.

"Impudent pack!" he muttered. "I 'd rather have stood outside in the snow, but since I 'm now inside here, it 's a matter of keeping awake, peeping about, and going often to the window to listen and spy."

He tried to lock the door from inside, but it was without both bolt and key. After he had worked in vain for a long time to get off his wet boots, whose musty smell annoyed him, he put on his dressing-gown and lay down in his boots on the bed.

At times he heard a muffled stamping and snorting from the wild horses in the carriage entrance under the floor of the hall, but after a while it grew more quiet, and he began to think that the candle did not light sufficiently, because all the corners and recesses were dark. He raised his lorgnette, sharpened his gaze, and turned his eyes on all sides, but otherwise lay quite motionless.

Then he saw by the door-jamb close behind the curtain at the head of his bed a tall, thin lackey in a brown coat with black braid.

A cramp-like dread caught him by the throat, he

grew dizzy, but he thought: "It is only the good God who wishes to try me because I am dreaming of distinctions and certificates."

Softly and almost imperceptibly he caught hold of both sides of the bed so as to control his shuddering body, and then he stuck his right leg out between the curtains.

"Jonathan," said he, "pull off my boot!"

The lackey grinned so that his dark mouth twisted itself up to his ears, but he did not move from his place.

French Mons chattered his teeth, but he did not draw back his leg.

"Jonathan, is this the way you serve folk of the nobility?"

The lackey grinned still worse, and made a disdainful gesture of refusal with his hand.

French Mons now understood that the lackey had seen through his deception and treated him as a parvenu and a plebeian, and his terror grew so great that he panted and moaned softly, but his leg he held continually outstretched.

"Pull off my boot, Jonathan!"

His voice was now barely a whisper.

The lackey rubbed his hands on his hips and grinned, but remained standing by the door-jamb.

At that moment the horse down below in the carriage entrance neighed long and piercingly, and far off in the snowstorm many horses answered.

French Mons threw himself from the bed.

"I 'm neglecting my duty," he cried. "That 's the enemy!"

He sprang forward to the table to grasp his sword, but the lackey walked beside him with long steps and stared him in the eyes.

Then he again grew paralyzed and stood still. Meanwhile the lackey took the sword with one hand, stretched out the other over the candlestick, and with two fingers lifted the great spliced wig on high and then drew it as an extinguisher over the burning candle.

"Good God in heaven!" stammered French Mons. "I have seldom gone into Thy house and have rather pampered myself and played with all sorts of vanity, but help me for this one time so that I do not neglect my duty and become a disgrace! Then Thou may'st punish me eternally."

Neighings were heard ever nearer and nearer, and the wild horse rushed stamping and snorting from its retreat.

Then French Mons bent down with his clenched hands over his head, and threw himself in the dark upon the lackey.

"You spook of Beelzebub!" he shouted.

He pulled the sword to him and struck on all sides in the dark, and chairs fell to the floor. He could nowhere lay hold on Jonathan, but at last he struck his hands against the wall, and the door

opened. The two sisters with their lamps and their pale, wide-eyed countenances entered in only their chemises, without the wit to feel any embarrassment about it. They only rubbed against each other and stared at the stranger who had waked them with his racket. On this occasion he did not give himself time to bow, but shoved up the window and hopped to the ground. In his dressing-gown, with sword in hand, he ran along the house and heard behind him a harsh voice from the window, but he did not know whether it was that of the recluse or of Jonathan, or whether they were both one and the same.

"I said that you were a fool," cried the voice, "a great fool, a fool without peer, and I wanted to be even with you. But if the horsemen get to see you, and there is a hand-to-hand fight, my house, my home, my nook will be an ash-heap before the cock crows."

Without looking back, French Mons sprang in among the trees, thinking all the while: "Now's the chance for an officer's commission! And then the certificate, the certificate!"

The moonlight shone through the snowstorm, and he saw Polacks with waving plumes flit by like shadows. When they came too near, he threw himself down beside a heap of twigs or set himself behind a tree trunk.

At last he discovered an old snow-covered bar-

ricade. Behind the logs a soldier rose and asked in a whisper: "Who goes there?"

"God with us! Good comrade!" answered French Mons, and climbed into the triangle. "The enemy is upon us!"

"I have long thought I heard hoofs," said Oxehufvud softly. "Perhaps it would be wisest to run down and occupy the house."

"Captain, do not command me to show the way! I was received there as a guest; I am a chevalier and would rather be shot."

"And how were you treated there?"

"Like an excellency."

"We shall see. It seems to be too late now. Take aim! Fire!"

A swarm of Polacks galloped forward and struck with their spears across the logs, but the first volley threw them from the saddle.

"Oohaho! oohaho!" rang through the wood. Riding shadows and long lines of men on foot gathered as far as the eye could see. In the half light they resembled the dark bushes that swayed in the wind.

"I fancy we're going to have a pretty party with the enemy," said Oxehufvud. "We are five-and-twenty men, and around us stand fully three battalions."

"Now we are only twenty-four," answered

French Mons as he took the musket from a fallen soldier.

"Now we are only nineteen," said Oxehufvud after a time.

Shot rained over the triangle and killed man after man. As soon as the riders shrank back, the Swedes stopped shooting, but when the silence once more enticed the Polacks and inspired them with the belief that there was no longer any man living behind the barricade, they were met at once by shot and swords and stones and boughs of trees. So the raging strife continued hour after hour.

Oxehufvud stole along the stockade and counted half aloud: "Eight, ten, thirteen — we're not many now. A sorry number."

He, too, had taken a musket, and on his knees was picking up the ammunition from the cartridge-box of one of the fallen.

"Comrade," said he, and without rising he drew French Mons to him in his dressing-gown. "I gave it to you rough, comrade, at noon on the swamp."

"Now we are only seven," answered French Mons, loading and firing. "But soon we shall have held out three hours."

"Comrade, you are not the first who has shown me that the Swedes should not always laugh at their dandies. You see, comrade, it happens some-

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spring of his days. No drinking-songs rang out, but the king had kettledrums and oboes play merrily all night. It was a camp where that soft noise was like the murmur of a clear forest brook under leafage dewy with June.

Against the wish of the king, his bodyguards had wound his tent with hay and on that had laid sod, so that it was like a charcoal-kiln. It stood, not in the middle of the camp, but on the outermost edge and almost in darkness. Within, by the tent-pole, they had built a fireplace of stones and had brought there time and again a red-hot cannon-ball. There was a wash-basin of pure silver, and on the table, beside the Life of Alexander the Great and the gold-bound Bible, stood a little silver-plated image of the dog Pompey, which had died. But the light blue silken brocade on the chair and field-bed was already worn and spotted. In the middle of the tent crouched the dogs, Turk and Snuffler, but the king lay among the fir-twigs on the ground. The small beer was done, and the lackey Hultman had had nothing but a glass of melted snow and two slack-baked biscuits to offer him for supper. After that he had spread his cape over him and put on his embroidered nightcap. There now, at the midday height of his victories, slept the king of the Swedes, and his narrow head was turned toward the languishing gleam of the last glowing cannon-ball. It was long now since he had read the evening prayer

which he had formerly stammered out in his room while the wind raged in the lindens of Karlberg Park. His god had gradually darkened into the thunderous god of the Old Testament, to the avenging Lord of Sabaoth, whose commands he heard in his soul without needing to pray for them; and it was Thor and the Asar who drove around this camp in the rumbling of the nocturnal storm, and who with their trumpets hailed their youngest-born on earth.

Then the dogs began to whimper and growl, and the half-grown Max of Wurtemberg, the Little Prince, came, overjoyed and beaming, to the opening of the tent.

"Your Majesty," he cried, with his ringing boyish voice, "awake, awake! Five-and-twenty Smålanders have been out and played with the enemy."

Behind him stood French Mons, propped against the gallant Captain Schmiedeberg, who himself still went on a crutch after an engagement over the baggage, where he with twelve men had fought against three hundred Polacks.

French Mons had never carried his head more proudly and contentedly, though he reeled with weariness; but when he heard that he was standing before the king's tent, he stopped short in anxiety. He stooped and tremblingly wiped the bloodstains from his hands. His hat, the medium peruke, and the little peruke he threw upon the ground, and

without considering the regulations, put on the great spliced peruke. When he got himself in order, he extended his arms along his sides and told his story stammeringly with chattering teeth.

The king, who continued to sit on the fir-twigs, then slowly repeated it, investigating every word so as not to miss a single detail of the adventure. He rejoiced as a child would at a wonderful saga. Finally he gave him his hand.

"Oxehufvud spoke rightly," he said. "The gentlemen have had a pretty party with the enemy. It has been quiet enough here in camp, and I should myself have gladly been along. Since the Polish recluse begged in jest the loan of five louis d'or, I will leave him ten, and the gentleman shall go back and throw them in to him through the window."

French Mons went backward through the tent door, and Schmiedeberg caught him around the waist and conducted him into a ring of inquisitive, expectant comrades. There were ensigns and lieutenants and captains, who were his equals in age, but who had already risen higher in rank than he.

"French Mons," they murmured, "now no one any longer dares laugh at your lorgnettes and your wigs. But how did it go with your commission and certificate? The certificate!"

"Quiet, quiet!" said Schmiedeberg. "There are other rewards for the poor fellow. If His Royal Majesty might prevail, he would give no rewards,

but would wish that each and all should fight and fall for honor alone."

No one dared contradict Schmiedeberg, and dropping the arm of his new-found charge, he limped on his crutch a few steps nearer the fire.

"Did n't you see?" he whispered — "did n't you see that His Royal Majesty took him by the hand almost as an equal?"

"There I got my certificate for time and eternity," said French Mons.

In his dripping spliced wig and ragged shirt he stood all the while upright with arms at his sides, and he still stammered in his speech and chattered his teeth.

"And your charter as baron," answered Schmiedeberg softly, "you get when you fall."

## *The Queen of the Marauders*

THE tocsin in the church tower at Narva had ceased. In a breach of the battered rampart lay the fallen Swedish heroes, over whose despoiled and naked bodies the Russians stormed into the city with wild cries. Some Cossacks, who had sewed a live cat into the belly of an innkeeper, were still laughing in a circle around their victim, but the gigantic Peter Alexievitch, the czar, soon burst his way through the midst of the throng on street and courtyard and cut down his own men to check their misdeeds. His right arm up to the shoulder was drenched with the blood of his own subjects. Weary of murder, troop after troop finally assembled in the square and the churchyard. Under the pretext that the churches had been desecrated by the misbelievers who lay buried there, bands of soldiers began to violate and plunder the graves. Stones were pried up from the floor of the church with crowbars, and outside the graves were opened with shovels. Pillagers broke the copper and tin caskets into pieces, and threw dice for the silver handles and plates. The streets, where at the first mêlée the inhabitants had thrown down firebrands and tiles, and where the blood of the slain was still running in the gutters, were for many days piled up with rusty or half-blackened coffins. The hair on some of the bodies had grown so that it hung

out between the boards. Some of the dead lay embalmed and well preserved, though brown and withered, but from most of the coffins yellow skeletons grinned forth from collapsed and mouldered shrouds. People who stole anxiously among them read the coffin-plates in the twilight, and now and then recognized the name of a near relative, a mother or a sister. Sometimes they saw the ravagers pull out the decayed remains and throw them into the river. Sometimes, again, protected by night, they themselves succeeded in carrying them off and burying them outside the city. So in the dusk one might encounter an old man or woman who came stealing along toilsomely with children or serving-maids, carrying a coffin.

One night a swarm of pillagers bivouacked in a corner of the churchyard. Hi! what fun it was to pile up a bonfire of bed-slats and bolsters and chairs and coffin-ends and what the devil else could be dragged forth! Flames and sparks blazed up as high as the attic window of the parsonage. Round about stood coffins propped one against another. The bottom of one of the uppermost had been broken, so that the treasurer, of blessed memory, who was inside it, stood there upright with his spliced wig on his head and looked as if he thought: "I pray you, into what company have I been conducted?"

"Haha! little father," the robbers called to him, as they roasted August apples and onions at the

flames; "you surely want something to wet your whistle, you there!"

The glow of the fire lighted up the living-room of the parsonage, and the sparks flew in through the broken panes. In the rooms stood only a broken table and a chair, upon which sat the parson with his head propped on his hands.

"Who knows? Perhaps it might succeed," he mumbled, and raised himself as if he had found the key to a long-considered problem.

His silver-white beard spread itself all over his breast, and his hair hung down to his shoulders. In his youth, as chaplain, he had gone in for a little of everything, and he had never pushed back a cup that was offered him. Afterwards, as a widower in the parsonage, he had worshipped God with joy and mirth and a brimming bowl, and it was bruited about that he did not reach first for his Bible if a well-formed wench happened to be in his company. He therefore even now took misfortune more bravely and resignedly than others, and his heart was as undaunted as his soldierly body was unbowed by years.

He went out into the entry and cautiously pulled out the five or six rusty nails that held down a couple of boards above a little narrow recess under the stairs. Then he lifted the boards aside.

"Come out, my child!" he said.

When no one obeyed him, his voice grew some-

what more severe, and he repeated his words: "Come out, Lina! Both the other maids have been bound and carried away. It was verily at the last minute that I got you in here. But it is almost a day since then, and you cannot live without meat and drink. Eh?"

When he was not obeyed, he threw back his head in annoyance, and he now spoke in accents of harsh command: "Why don't you obey? Do you think there is food here? There's not so much as a pinch of salt left in the house. You must be got away, you understand. If it goes ill with you, if a plunderer gets you on the way, I can only say this: clasp your arms about his neck and follow with him on his horse's back wherever it carries you. Many a time in the rough-and-tumble of war have I seen such a love, and then I have slung the soldier's cloak over my priest's frock and waved my hat for a lucky end to the song. Don't you hear, lass? When your late father, who was a tippler—if I must tell the truth—was my stable-boy and pulled me out of a hole in the ice once, I promised for the future to provide for him and his child. Besides, he was Swedish born, as I was. Well, have n't I always been a fatherly master to you, or what has Her Grace to object? Have her wits deserted her, eh?"

Something now began to move in the pitch-black recess. An elbow struck against the wall, there was a rustling and scraping, and with that Lina Anders-

daughter stepped out, barefooted, in nothing but her chemise and a torn red jacket without sleeves but with a whole back to it, over which hung the braid of her brown hair.

The light of the fire fell in through the window. Squatted together, she held her chemise between her knees, but her fresh, downward-bent face with broad, open features was as merry as if she had just stepped out of her settle-bed on a bright winter morning in the light of the dawn.

The blood ran impetuously enough through the veins of the white-haired chaplain, but in that moment he was but master and father.

"I did not know that in my simple house folk had learned such a ceremonious feeling of delicacy," said he, and gave her a friendly pat on the bare shoulders.

She looked up.

"No," she said, "it 's only because I 'm so wretchedly cold."

"Ah, well, that 's natural. That 's the way I like people to talk in my house. But I have no garments to give you. My own hang on me in tatters. The house may burn at any time. I myself can maybe sneak out on my way unaccosted, and I have a Riga rix-dollar in my pocket. Who asks about a ragged old man? It 's another affair with you, Lina. I know these wild fellows. I know but one way to get you off, but I myself shrink from telling it. Naturally, you are afraid."

"Afraid I 'm not. It will go with me as it may. To be sure, I am no better than the others. Only I 'm perishing of cold."

"Come here to the door, then, but don't be frightened. Do you see out there in the doorway the rascals have set a little wooden casket. It cannot be very heavy, but I think you will have room in it. If you dare lay yourself in the casket, perhaps I can smuggle you out of the town."

"That I surely dare."

Her teeth chattered, and she trembled, but she straightened herself up a little, let the chemise hang free, and went out on the stones in the doorway.

The pastor lifted off the moist lid, which was loose, and found nothing in the plundered casket but shavings and a brown blanket.

"That was just what I needed," she shivered. She pulled up the blanket, wrapped it over her, stepped up, and laid herself on her back in the shavings.

The pastor bent over her, laid both his hands on her shoulders, and looked into her fearless eyes. She might be eighteen or nineteen years old. Her hair was stroked smoothly back to the braid.

As he stood so, it came over him that he had not always looked on her in the past with as pure and fatherly feelings as he himself had wished and as he had pretended to do. But now he did so. His long white hair fell down as far as her cheeks.

"May it go well with you, child! I am old. It matters little whether my life goes on for a while still or is destroyed in the day that now is. I have been in many a piece of mischief and many an ill deed in my time, and for the forgiveness of my sins I will also for once have part in something good."

He nodded and nodded toward her and raised himself.

There outside the clamor sounded louder than ever. He laid on the lid and fastened in as well as he could the long screws that had been left in their places. Then he knelt, knotted a rope crosswise around the casket, and with strong arms lifted the heavy burden on his back. Bending forward and staggering, he strode out into the open air.

"Look there!" shouted one of the pillagers at the fire, but his nearest comrade silenced him with the word: "Let the poor old man alone! That 's only a miserable beggar's casket."

Sweat trickled out over the old man's face, and his back and arms ached and smarted under the heavy weight. Step by step he moved forward through the dark streets. Every now and then he had to set the casket down on the ground to take breath, but then he stood with his hand on the lid in constant fear of being challenged and hustled away or of being stabbed by some roving band of soldier revellers. Several times he had to step to one side because of

the heavy wagons, loaded with men and women, who were to be taken hundreds of miles into Russia to people the waste regions. The great conquering czar was a sower who did not count the seeds he strewed.

When finally the old war-pastor reached the town gate, and the watch came to meet him, he roused his strength to the utmost with all the collected will-power of his anxiety. With a single arm he held the casket in place on his back, while with his free hand he drew the Riga rix-dollar from his pocket and handed it to the sentry as a bribe.

The soldier motioned to him to go on.

He wanted again to move his foot forward, but now he was unable. Through the town gate he saw the river glimmer on the open plain, but then it grew dark before his eyes. Still afraid for his burden in his helplessness, he softly and cautiously lowered the casket beside him on the stone flagging. Thereupon he fell forward and died.

The other men of the watch sprang forward and began to curse and complain. No casket could remain standing there in the door of the gateway.

The officers, who were sitting and gambling in a room of the casemate, now came likewise to the spot. One of them, a little dry, weather-beaten figure with rectangular spectacles, who was more like a clerk than a soldier, took a lantern, came forward, and held the lid slightly ajar with his scabbard.

First he drew back his head precipitately, nearly dropping the lantern. The next time he bent down and looked in, he dwelt on the action longer and more searchingly, and afterwards passed his hands over his whole face to hide his thoughts. Then he unhooked his spectacles and stood pondering. When he bent the third time, he sent the light back and forward through the crevice, — and there inside lay Lina Andersdaughter quite calmly, screwing up her eyes at him in the lantern's light without herself knowing what was going on.

"I 'm hungry," she said.

He laid aside the lantern and went a couple of paces up and down through the door with hands crossed behind his back. There came then into his frigid expression a sly and merrily vibrating life, and unnoticed he took some August apples and thrust them into the casket. Thereupon he began to give commands.

"Come here, boys! Let eight men take the casket to General Ogilvy, salute him, and say that this is a small gift from his humble servant, Ivan Alexievitch. Eight of you others who have just come from working on the walls go after it, and roll up your leather aprons like trumpets in which you are to blow the regimental march. But in front of all, two men are to go with rushlights. Forward, march!"

The savage soldiers looked open-mouthed at one another and obeyed. Laughing, they lifted the

casket on their muskets. Two long stalks, tarred and twisted about with straw, were brought forward from a corner of the gateway and lighted at the lantern; and as the procession set itself in motion into the field toward the camp, the musicians tooted the march in their aprons:

*O you, who have chosen a gun to bear,*
*You care not for lodging or bed, lad,*
*You feed like a prince on the finest fare,*
*Of girls and of lice you've enough and to spare,*
*But when will you ever be paid, lad?*

When they came to the camp, the soldiers rushed together around them in the torchlight. General Ogilvy, who was sitting at table, came out of his tent.

"Beloved little father," said one of the bearers, "Lieutenant Ivan Alexievitch humbly sends you this gift."

Ogilvy grew pale and bit his lips under his bushy gray moustache. His face, wrinkled and strained to harshness, was at bottom good-natured and friendly.

"Is he out of his right mind?" he thundered with pretended wrath, though in reality he was as frightened as a boy. "Put down the casket and break off the lid!"

The soldiers pried it open with their blades, and the dark lid rattled to one side.

Ogilvy stared. With that he burst out laughing.

He guffawed so that he had to sit down on an earthen bench. And the soldiers laughed, too. They laughed down through the whole lane of tents, so that they reeled and tottered and had to support themselves one against another like drunkards. Lina Andersdaughter lay there in the casket with a half-eaten apple in her hand and made great eyes. She had now become warm again, and was as blooming of cheek as a doll.

"By all the saints," Ogilvy burst out. "Not even in the catacombs of St. Anthony has man seen such a miracle. This is a corpse that ought to be sent to the czar himself."

"By no means," answered one of his officers. "I sent him two little fair-haired baggages day before yesterday, but he cares only for thin brunettes."

"So it is," answered Ogilvy, and turned himself, bending, toward Narva. "Salute Ivan Alexievitch and say that, when the casket is returned, there shall lie in the bottom of it a captain's commission. — Hey, sweetheart!"

He went forward and stroked Lina Andersdaughter under the chin.

But at that she sat up, took hold of his hair, and gave him a resounding box on the ear, and after that another.

He did not let it affect him in the least, but continued to laugh.

"That 's the way I like them," he said; "that 's the way I like them. I will make you Queen of the Marauders, my chick, and as token thereof I give you here a bracelet with a turquoise in the clasp. A band of our worst rabble stole it just now from the casket of Countess Horn in Narva."

He shook the chain from his wrist, and she caught it eagerly to her.

When, later in the evening, the cloth was laid in the tent, Lina Andersdaughter sat at the table beside Ogilvy. She had now got French clothes of flowered brocade, and wore a headdress with blonde lace. But what hands! She managed to eat with gloves, but under them swelled the big, broad fingers, and the red shone between the buttons.

"Hoho! hoho!" shouted the generals. "Those hands make a man merrier than he would get with a whole flask of Hungary. Help! Tighten our belts! Hold us under the arms! It will be the death of us!"

Meanwhile she filled her plate, munched sweetmeats, and sat with her spoon in the air. If anything tasted bad, she made a face. Eat she could. Drink, on the contrary, she would not, but only took a swallow in her mouth, and then spurted the wine over the generals. But all their curses and worst expressions she picked up, while she sat ever alike blooming and gay.

"Help! help!" shrieked the generals, choked

with laughter. "Blow out the light so we can't see her! Hold our foreheads! Help! Will you have a little puff of a tobacco pipe, mademoiselle?"

"Go to the deuce! Can't I sit in peace?" answered Lina Andersdaughter.

There was one thing, though, that Ogilvy skilfully concealed, so that the laughers should not turn to him and nudge him in the ribs and pull his coat tails and say: "Oho, little father, you've got into water too deep for your bald head. Bless you, little father, bless you and your little mishap!"

He pretended always to treat her with slightly indifferent familiarity, but he never sat so near her that his dog could not jump up between them. He never took hold of her so that any one saw it, and never when no one saw it either, for then he knew that her hand would catch him on the face, so that the glove would split, and the red shine out in all its strength. It was a fact that, notwithstanding, she now and then gave him a slap in the middle of the face, and no one did she snub worse than him. But at all this he only laughed with the others, so that never before had there been in the camp such a clamor and bedlam.

Sometimes he thought of knouting her, but he was ashamed before the others, because everything could be heard through the tent, and he feared that they then would the more easily guess how things stood, and how little he got along with the girl.

"Wait," he thought, "we shall be sitting alone sometime behind locked doors. Just wait! Till then things may go on as they do."

"Help, help!" shouted the generals. "That's how she carries her train. We must take hold of it. Lord, Lord, no; but just look!"

"Take it up, you," said she. "Take it up, you. That's what you are for."

And so the generals were cuffed and bore her train, both when she came to the table and when she went.

Then it happened one evening, when she sat among the drinking old men, that an adjutant stepped in, hesitating and embarrassed. He turned to Ogilvy.

"Dare I be frank?"

"Naturally, my lad."

"And whatever I say will be forgiven?"

"By my honor. Only speak out!"

"The czar is on his way out to the camp."

"Very good, he is my gracious lord."

The adjutant pointed at Lina Andersdaughter.

"The czar has a fancy for tall brunettes," said Ogilvy.

"Your Excellency, in these last days he has changed his taste."

"God! Call the troops to arms—and forward with the three-horse wagon!"

Now the alarm was struck. Drums rolled, trum-

pets blared, weapons clattered, and shouts and trampling filled the night. The drinking party was broken up, and Lina Andersdaughter was set in a baggage wagon.

Beside the peasant who was driving a soldier sprang up with a lighted lantern, and she heard the peasant softly inquire of him the purpose of the flight.

"The czar," answered the soldier in a monotone, and pointed with his thumb over his shoulder at the girl.

At that the peasant shrunk together as at a frost-cold breeze, and whipped the small, shaggy horses more and more wildly. He hallooed and beat and urged them into a thundering gallop. The lantern light fell caressingly on the fir bushes and the burnt homesteads; the wagon banged and tottered among the stones, and creaked in its joints.

Lina Andersdaughter lay on her back in the hay, and looked at the stars. Whither was she carried? What fate awaited her? She wondered and wondered. On her wrist hung the bracelet as a talisman, a pledge for the accomplishing of Ogilvy's wonderful prediction. Queen of the Marauders! It sounded so grand, though at first she had but gradually discovered what the word really betokened. She stroked and plucked at the small silver rings. Then she sat up and scanned the stony road in the lantern's light. Cautiously she moved further and fur-

ther out. Unnoticed, she climbed slowly over the wagon-sill and lowered her feet to the ground. Would she be crushed and left lying? For a few steps she dragged along. Then she lost her hold, stumbled, and fell lacerated among the bushes.

On thundered the baggage wagon with its three galloping horses, and the lantern light vanished. Then she got up and wiped off the blood from her cheeks, while she wandered forth into the trackless woods.

When she met barbarous-looking fugitives, and they saw her pretty face, they at once picked berries and mushrooms for her and followed along. She got a whole court of ragamuffins, and she treated them so ill that they scarcely dared to touch her dress, but sometimes they stabbed one another. Finally she took service with a skipper's wife, who was to sail with her husband to Danzig. Scarcely had it begun to grow dark when the ragamuffins came out one after another and took service for nothing. The skipper sat on his cabin in the moonlight, blew his shepherd's pipe, and congratulated himself on having got such a willing crew. And never had the old woman seen a stronger serving-maid. But hardly had they put to sea when Lina Andersdaughter sat herself beside the skipper with her arms crossed, and all the ragamuffins lay on their backs and sang in tune with the pipe.

"Do you think I 'll scour your bunks?" said she.

"Beat her, beat her," cried the old woman, but the skipper only moved nearer, and blew and blew on his pipe. Night and day the vessel rocked on the bright waves with slack sail, and the skipper played for Lina Andersdaughter, who danced with her ragamuffins; but down in the cabin sat the old woman, crying and lamenting.

When they came to Danzig, the skipper stuck the pipe under his arm and slunk off the vessel at night with Lina Andersdaughter and her ragamuffins. They guessed now that she thought of going to the Swedish troops in Poland and compelling the king himself to give her his hand.

When she with her followers stepped, humming, in among the Swedish women of the camp, there was uproar and alarm, because for two days they had sat by their wagons without food. The last provisions had been delivered to the sutlers and divided among the soldiers. Then she stepped forward to the first corporal she happened on and set her hands on her hips.

"Are n't you ashamed," said she, "to let my women starve, when in spite of all you can't get along without them?"

"*Your* women? Who are you?"

She pointed to her bracelet. "I am Lina Andersdaughter, the Queen of the Marauders, and now take five men and follow us!"

He looked toward his captain, the reckless Jacob

Elfsberg; he looked at her pretty face and at his men. How the line surrounded her with their muskets, and the women armed themselves with whip-handles and pokers! At night, when the light of the camp-fire tinged the heavens, the king, inquisitive, got into his saddle. As the wild throng came back with well-laden wagons and oxen and sheep, the troops cheered louder than ever: "Hurrah for King Charles! Hurrah for Queen Caroline!"

The women thronged about the king's horse, so that the lackeys had to hold them back, and Lina Andersdaughter went to him to shake hands with him. But he thereupon rose in his stirrups, and shouted over the women's heads to the corporal and the five soldiers: "That 's well maraudered, boys!"

From that moment she would never hear the king named, and whenever she met a man, she flung her sharpest abuse right in his face, whether he was plain private or general. When Malcomb Björkman, the young guardsman — who, however, was already famous for his exploits and wounds — held out his hand to her, she scornfully laid in it her ragged, empty purse; and she was never angrier than when she heard General Meyerfelt whistling as he rode before his dragoons, or recognized Colonel Grothusen's yellow-brown cheeks and raven-black wig. But if a wounded wretch lay beside the road, she offered him the last drop from her tin flask and lifted him into her wagon. Frost and

scratches soon calloused her cheeks. High on the baggage wagon she sat with the butt of a whip and commanded all the wild camp-followers, loose women, lawful wives, and thievish fellows that streamed to them from east and west. When at night the flare of a fire arose toward heaven, the soldiers knew that Queen Caroline was out on a plundering raid.

Days and years went by. Then, after the jolly winter quarters in Saxony, when the troops were marching toward the Ukraine, the king commanded that all women should leave the army.

"Teach him to mind his own affairs!" muttered Lina Andersdaughter, and she very tranquilly drove on.

But when the army came to the Beresina, there was murmuring and lamenting among the women. They gathered around Lina Andersdaughter's cart and wrung their hands and lifted their babies on high.

"See what you have to answer for! The troops have already crossed the river and broken all the bridges behind them. They have left us as prey to the Cossacks."

She sat with her whip on her knee and with high boots, but on her wrist still gleamed the silver chain with its turquoise. All the more violently did the terrified women sob and moan around her, and from the closed baggage wagons, which were like boxes, crept out painted and powdered Saxon hus-

sies. Some of them, none the less, had satin gowns and gold necklaces. From all sides came women she had never seen before.

"Dirty wenches!" muttered she. "Now at last I have a chance to see the smuggled goods that the captains and lieutenants brought along in their wagons. What have you to do among my poor baggage crones? But now we all come to know what a man amounts to when his haversack is getting light."

Then they caught hold of her clothes, and called upon her as if she alone could seal their fate.

"Is there no one," she asked, "who knows the psalm, 'When I am borne through the Vale of Death'? Sing it, sing it!"

Some of the women struck up the psalm with choked and nearly whispering voices, but the others rushed down to the river, hunted out boats and wreckage from the bridges, and rowed themselves across. Each and every one who had a husband or a beloved in the army had hoped that even at the last she would be taken along and hidden; but all the worst women of the rabble, who belonged neither to this man nor to that, stood with their rags or their tasteless, ridiculous gowns in a ring around Lina Andersdaughter. Meanwhile swarms of Cossacks, who had crossed the river to snap up any straggling marauders, were sneaking up through the bushes on their hands and knees.

Then her heart failed her, and she stepped down from the wagon.

"Poor children!" she said, and patted the hussies on the cheek. "Poor children, I will not desert you. But now—devil take me!—do you pray to God that He will make your blood-red sins white, for I have nothing else to offer you than to shame the men and die a hero's death."

She opened the wagon chest and hunted out from among her plunder some pikes and Polish sabres, which she put into the hands of the softly singing women. Thereupon she herself grasped a musket without powder or shot, and set herself among the others around the cart to wait. So they stood in the sunset light on the highest part of the shore.

Then the women on the river saw the Cossacks rush forward to the cart and cut down one after another of them with the idea that they were men in disguise. They wanted to turn their boats, and soldiers sprang down from their ranks to the water and opened fire.

"Hurrah for King Charles," they cried with a thousand intermingled voices; "and hurrah—No, it's too late. Look, look! There is Queen Caroline dying a virgin in the midst of the harlots with a musket in her hand!"

## *Mazeppa and His Ambassador*

IN a splendidly decorated sleeping apartment stood a high bed with plumes at the corners. Behind the half-drawn bed-curtain lay an old man of sixty-three with the coverlet pulled up under his beard, his long white hair spread over the pillow. His whole forehead was hidden under a plaster. It was Mazeppa.

Beside the bed, among cups of medicine on the carpet, lay several books of Latin and French poetry, and at the door a little wizened priest carried on a whispered conversation with two green-clad messengers from Czar Peter.

"He scarcely comprehends your words," whispered the priest, giving a painfully searching look toward the sick man. "He even lies speechless for long periods. Who could have imagined that the old man with his joy of life would suddenly lie on his death-bed?"

"Ivan Stefanovitch," one of the strangers said with raised voice, approaching the bed, "our magnanimous czar, your lord, sends you greeting. Do you remember? Those three Cossacks of yours who stole off to him and related that you secretly planned a rebellion against his over-lordship, he has had them fettered and returned to you as gifts of friendship. Ivan Stefanovitch, he relies on your loyalty."

Mazeppa's eyes opened feebly and his lips moved, but he was only able to utter an unintelligible whisper.

"We understand you," cried the messengers, speaking all at once. "We understand you. You greet him and thank him for his favor, and we are to say to him that you are bowed under your years and that you have already turned all your thoughts to that which is not of this world."

"I fear," murmured the priest to them aside, "that here it will soon be over."

The messengers nodded sadly, and backed out of the sleeping apartment.

As soon as they were out, the priest bolted the door.

"They have gone," he said.

Mazeppa sat up and tore the plaster from his brow, throwing it far across the carpet. His dark wide-open eyes gleamed and twinkled. A flush rose and paled on his cheeks, and under the handsomely curving nose shone teeth as white and fresh as a youth's. He tossed away the coverlet and, fully clad from tip to toe in long-coat and boots with spurs, he sprang from the bed, and jestingly pinched the priest in the ribs.

"You little rascal priest, you! You vagabond! This time we did n't manage badly. In Moscow they will believe that old Mazeppa is lying helpless and harmless. God be gracious to his pious

soul! Haha-hey! You little rascal priest, you! You arch-hypocrite!"

The priest laughed dryly. He was a deposed bishop from Bulgaria, and his round head with its short nose and deep-sunken eyes was like a skull.

Mazeppa grew still livelier.

"Mazeppa dying! Ay, ask his mistresses! Only ask them! No, my great Muscovite czar, you, now I am going to live and be quits with you."

"The czar suspects you, my lord, but he wishes to disarm you with magnanimity. He can be like that."

"And I should have been conquered by it, if one night at table, when we were drunk, he had not struck me on the ear. I value my ear as he does his, and an insult I can never forgive. It sticks in the soul and frets and gnaws. If I am not a king by birth, I am one in soul. And what does he want with his German coats on my splendid Cossacks? Now to business! Relate your adventures, you liar!"

"My lord, dressed as a mendicant monk, I went forth on my way to the Swedish headquarters. Sometimes I set a tavern lass on my knee and a can on the table corner, but when I peeped down and saw the toes sticking out of my ragged shoes, I thought to myself: This is Mazeppa's ambassador!"

"Very good, but how did you find the dandy?"

"The dandy?"

"To be sure. His Swedish Majesty, King Carolus. Don't you believe he dandifies as much with his grimy rags as any French prince of scented water with his silk stockings? And he possesses that wonderful Northern recklessness which continually snaps a riding-whip and cries: 'Rubbish! that's nothing! It's no matter!'—He has never been able to grieve for a misfortune longer than overnight. That has been the secret of his power. Woe to him and his fate when he sits up night after night without sleep! I am curious to see him. I long for it. But tell on!"

"First I found him in wig and armor on the tavern lass's neckcloth or pinafore, and on the glass from which I drank, and on the icing I ate, and on table-cloths and chest-lids and tobacco-boxes and market-booths. No one spoke of anything else than of him, and the children arranged themselves and played at Swedish divine service. The old peasants called him the sword-pope of the Protestants chosen by God Himself, and took off their hats in speaking of him."

"Ah yes, but how did you find him himself, when you came to headquarters?"

"I warn you. I predict misfortunes. I saw an omen. I found him puffed up and haughty of spirit."

"As a great personality of whom the world begins to disapprove."

"Marlborough, after an audience in Saxony, left his camp with a shrug of the shoulders, and sovereigns begin to laugh at him behind his back. His own generals have grown weary."

"He has become a hero of the rabble, you think. Well, even then, that's the sort of man I need to gather the wild hordes. If you do not assure me that you have seen him eat and drink, I cannot believe that he is a living human being. Then I should have to say: The young prince of the Swedes fell in the tumult of victory at Narva, but his shade rides ever on before his troops. Snow falls and falls, and drums rattle and rumble, and the thinning battalions do not know and do not understand whither he leads them. When the enemy recognize him in the powder-smoke, they lower their muskets in superstitious awe and dare not shoot, and he does not notice that sometimes he cuts down men who are making ready to fall on their knees. Hired assassins throw down their weapons at sight of him and give themselves up—and he lets them go unpunished. Don't talk to him about states and treaties! He does not fight for possessions as men do; he wields the sword of God to revenge and reward. What did he require just now as the reward of victory at the conclusion of peace? Money? Land? Of Austria he required a councillor who had slandered him at table and a swarm of Russian soldiers who had fled in over the border—and free-

dom of conscience for the Protestants. Of Prussia he demanded the imprisonment of a colonel who had given counsel to the czar, and banishment for a writer who had cavilled at his stipulations against the Pietists. Of Saxony he demanded Patkull and all Swedish renegades, but freedom for the Princes Sobieski and all Saxons who had gone over to the Swedes. King August himself he compelled to pack up the old Polish regalia in a velvet trunk and send them to King Stanislaus. And now, since he has deposed King August in Poland, he wants to depose the czar or challenge him to a duel, but their crowns and governments he would not even take as a gift. Since antiquity no stranger man has held a sword or a sceptre."

Mazeppa, while he was speaking, grasped one of the bedposts so hard that the plumes of the silken canopy shook.

But the other lifted three fingers and replied: "I have warned you. Everything that he touches he dedicates to misery and death. Yet he is the patron saint of adventurers. He has raised adventure to stability and greatness. You too, my lord, are an adventurer, and I myself am the worst adventurer of you all. Therefore I will be compliant."

He lowered his hand and drew near with disrespectful familiarity. "You, Ivan Stefanovitch! Have you never wondered that I directed my steps to your particular door?"

"You were driven from your episcopal see because of your unfaith and your pranks."

"It really amounted to a little pilfering of small import. There were on the ikon-stand a couple of emeralds—"

"Which you replaced with bits of glass and in all secrecy sold, so that you might live more bountifully and in a manner more worthy a servant of the church."

"Let us say no more about it!—So I heard of Mazeppa, the former page at Johann Casimir's court, who in his powdered wig was attentive to the wayward sex so long that a jealous husband at last bound him naked on a horse's back and drove him forth into the wilderness. And there he built up a kingdom of adventurers. Saint Andrew guarded you, Mazeppa. I needed a little master who would be ashamed to strike off a good head, who would let me read my Greek and my Machiavelli in peace, and to whom I might say: 'Agreed, old fellow! It's all a shadow play, even this that you are lord and I servant.' Therefore I came to you. My adventurer's blood cannot bear to sit still, and I weary of your wine mixed with water, for you are a great miser, Mazeppa; but as you are now pondering a financial transaction in musket-balls, I follow you. And as the Swedish king no longer listens to his generals or to the beseeching letters from his grandmother and his people, and comes hither by the

most perilous and impossible roads, he wishes to accept your offer of an alliance. With you and your Cossacks he will march against your lord. Here are the papers."

The priest shook off his cope and stood in Cossack dress with pistols in his girdle, and from his bosom he drew forth some folded papers.

Mazeppa grew pale, seized them, and held them pressed long to his mouth, while he sank his forehead and bowed as before the invisible image of a saint.

"Drums, drums!" he stammered in agitation.

But when the priest had got to the door, he checked him.

"No, don't let the drums strike up before tomorrow."

Thereupon he went to a plain wooden table in a little side-room, and sat down over his account books. He had his bailiffs summoned, and calculated and calculated, and prescribed greater economy in the milk department. Half a merry knight of the roads and half a learned but thrifty proprietor of lands, he finally superintended the packing of his many trunks and boxes. Sometimes he bent down and helped. Last of all, next morning he put on an old-fashioned and much-adorned Cossack costume. Impetuous and active, he sprang up from his chair as soon as he had sat down, but he remained standing before the mirror for some little

time, now and then running his delicate, small white hand through his beard.

As soon as the music was heard, he mounted to the saddle and kept his charger constantly at a gallop.

. . . . . .

When, after a time, he had come to the Swedes and was riding one morning through a flurry of snow in the king's retinue, the priest, as if by accident, pulled up his horse alongside him. Round about the troops marched past, sprinkled with grime, their weapons and cannon covered to prevent rusting. Baggage wagons clattered along with their weight of provision sacks and sick men, and sometimes with a covered coffin. Last were driven massed herds of cattle. Drunken Zaporogeans, prancing Cossacks, and eagerly drumming Polish Wallachians rode in green and red cloaks and with high brass helmets on which bells were tinkling. Some were brandishing tufted spears and bows or long flint-locks inlaid with silver and ivory. Others played on a sort of wailing wooden pipe. It was a colorful, legendary sort of march, that went over untrodden and unknown forest paths, over frozen marshes, and under snowy fir trees toward the mysterious East.

"Mazeppa," the priest began in a low voice, "you promised to come to the Swedes with thirty

thousand Cossacks, but hardly four thousand followed you."

Mazeppa kept his roan at a gallop, and nodded in silence, and the priest never wearied of his gibes.

"Day before yesterday half of these went off. Yesterday more still. Soon you will have barely a couple of hundred fellows, barely the servants who watch over your trunks and the two barrels with your money. Your uprising was betrayed, your cities are burned, your few faithful men nailed on boards and thrown into rivers. Soon you will be nothing but a gorgeous knight in the train of the Swedish king."

As Mazeppa was still, the priest continued: "Today I too will abandon you, because the small beer of the Swedes tastes sour to me, and my toes stick out too far from my shoes. Your ambassador needs a richer lord. Farewell, Ivan Stefanovitch!"

Mazeppa replied, "As long as I have still my head and my philosophy, I remain Mazeppa. While my Cossacks turned and broke away, I had the hetman staff and mace carried before me, and I rode on to the king as if I had come in front of Xerxes' millions. And he, with his impoverished realm, his discontented generals, and his sinking sun, came toward me like the most fortunate among princes. What does it trouble him and me how many ride behind us? He has had enough of kingly honor, and wishes also to be a chosen man of God. He

thinks of history as a man in love does of his sweetheart: he would not win her favor by his birth but by his person. If we two, he and I, should one day be the last survivors and sit in an earthen hut on the steppe, we should still continue to talk philosophy and treat each other as at a coronation dinner."

"You speak of his sinking sun. You have seen the omen, even you! He can no longer talk without boasting like a baggage driver."

"It is easy to be modest as long as everybody praises."

Mazeppa threw back his white-haired head with lofty contempt, and galloped forward to the king, who raised his hat and bowed and bowed again in his saddle.

Round about several of the generals joked as loudly as possible so that the king might hear them.

"When I come to Moscow," said Anders Lagerkrona, "I shall mend the seat of my trousers with the czar's night-cap."

"Pshaw!" answered Axel Sparre. "There is an old prophecy that a Sparre will some day be governor at the Kremlin."

"This way!" cried the ensigns. "Shoot down any one who dares to hinder such a great and exalted prince from marching forward wherever he chooses."

The king smiled and hummed: "Russia must run, Russia must run." But when the speakers were no longer within his hearing, they were transformed and became absent and melancholy.

"Your Majesty!" cried Mazeppa in crisp Latin and with kindling eyes, "Your Majesty's conquering arms go on so far that one fine morning we shall have hardly eight miles more to Asia."

"As to that the authorities used to disagree," answered the king, moved, but hunting for the Latin words, his gaze fettered by Mazeppa's white and pleasingly mobile hands. "If the border is not far off, we must go there, so that we can say we were also in Asia."

The voices died away, and the priest reined in his horse.

"Asia!" he muttered, "Asia does n't lie in the middle of Europe. But ride on, ride on with you, my adventurous lords! I have changed my name and dress so many times that none of you Swedes will ever notice what I was. But do not forget that it was the ragged monk, the vagabond, Mazeppa's ambassador, who by his cunning negotiations laid his blue-frozen finger on your and your demi-god's fate and directed you into the wildernesses. You are right, King Carolus, and you, Mazeppa. Everything depends at the last on individual men."

It snowed and snowed, and he sat motionless on his lean horse, while the battalions marched by,

silent and impatient. When the last soldiers turned and looked back at the solitary, unknown rider, and saw his little compressed death-skull head, they were seized with fear and hastened their steps.

## *Fifty Years Later*

WHEN the porridge had been eaten and the branch candles of tallow which shone on both sides of the pewter dish stood more than half burnt out, the chairs were drawn close to the fire. The manor-house was one of the smallest and poorest in the district, but in the evening no poverty was visible there. The straw lay soft as a carpet over the floor planks, fresh juniper had been set beside the dark and streaming windows, the gleam from the open fireplace tinted with yellow the whitewashed wooden walls. Recently, too, a goblet of sherry had been offered about. All knew, furthermore, that the most festive time of the evening was now come. Even the two servant-girls, who wore to-day their best holiday jackets, cleared the table as slowly as possible and hid themselves, waiting, by the door, for now old Captain Höök, a Charles man, brought out his tobacco-box and drew in the chair of honor to the middle place before the fire. It was, however, only after he had unlaced his brogans and laid his crossed feet with their thick white stockings on the fender to warm them thoroughly that he seemed to feel himself fully at ease. To be sure, he alone had carried on the conversation almost all the evening, and now at last spoke of Ehrencrona, who had received the Order of the Sword from King Frederick and never could wear it otherwise than in a

snuff-box. But in the same moment he became stern and reflective, and slipped into a new history. It was, indeed, alleged that he generally lied roundly, but nobody cared about that, for the principal thing was that he should keep on with his tales.

He was already an elderly man with a frost-bitten lump of a nose. Both his hair, which was brushed forward, and his moustaches, which were twisted youthfully, had always been so light that nobody noticed whether the years had made one or another strand still whiter. And he sat on the chair in his scanty, buttoned-up coat as upright as formerly. Without any transition he began in his usual way.

Yes, the autumn when I went astray in the woods I was certainly badly off. I mean the autumn down in Severia. Lewenhaupt had just made us destroy our last wagons, and was leading us along the Soza River to find a ford, so that when on the other side we might be able to grope our way forward to the king's army; but many foot-soldiers had stopped to plunder the wagons. I was an ensign at that time. Together with several others, I was sent back by Major-General Stackelberg to master the fellows, but the Russians were already among them, and I scarcely knew in the darkness how I could manage to save myself across the river. When, dripping with water and mud, I stood in the heather on the farther bank, I stumbled on a dragoon private. He was

from my own regiment, and we called him Long Jan, because he was one of the tallest and slimmest lads that ever lifted a Swedish blade. His chest was narrow, but his hands were large. His arms and legs seemed to have hardly a single muscle, and there was not a particle of down on his lean and simple face — a face any one would know again by the slanting eyes and the thick under lip. — God knows why he had ever been taken along. — But in that moment I was as glad to get sight of that lanky spectre as if I had met a sweetheart, and at random, but still as fast as we were able, we turned our steps into the forest.

At the start we leaped along so as to get warm and dry our clothes, and not until dawn did we lie down to sleep.

For many days after, we struggled on through the woods and swamps, and our clothes were still as wet as before. Once we took them off and hung them on a branch, but in the misty autumn air this helped but little, and we were only so much the colder when we succeeded, with great difficulty, in pulling them on again. As to our boots, there was no talk of getting them off. They dried temporarily during our progress, but soon became as completely soaked in a marsh, and one shower of rain followed another.

I had with me a bit of meat and a piece of black bread, which I divided with my silent and, as it

seemed, submissive brother in misfortune, and after that we chewed leaves and twigs and anything we could find. Hunger, though, was not nearly such a gnawing plague as the continual chilly dampness, which made our teeth chatter even in our sleep. As our strength failed, our joints stiffened, so that we could not move them without pain.

One evening we heard an unexpected barking, and for a moment I realized that I flushed with joy, but immediately after came hesitation, with thoughts of danger. I turned to the opposite direction, and Long Jan followed me, silently as always, but when we had walked awhile, I noticed that we only came much nearer to the barking. Then I took the soldier by the arm and turned again toward the other side, but, similarly drawn by an irresistible inner attraction, we kept walking so that we came nearer and nearer to the dog. When I finally let go of Long Jan's arm, he still went on.

"Halt!" I called after him, excruciated with the damp and yet little minded to go straight into a hostile place where most likely axes would be the first things to greet us.

"Halt, halt!" repeated Long Jan obediently, but in spite of that continued to go on.

Then I raced up to him and caught him by the belt. As long as I held him, he stood quite straight and motionless, but as soon as I let go my hold, he went on.

"Halt! Stand!" I thundered, raging as if I had found myself under fire, and dumbfounded at such an abrupt and insubordinate obstinacy in a soldier who had learned our iron-hard discipline. "Will you not obey your own ensign, fellow?"

"Halt! Stand!" he repeated, but continued on as before, as though no longer master of his own feet.

"Come on, then, in Jesus' name!" I burst out; "we can't get it worse than it has been already. But now you have made yourself an ensign, though you are barely one of the rank and file, and me a common soldier. Be so good as to lay that up in your memory!"

Long Jan answered nothing, neither perhaps did he hear me. I resigned myself to following him, and after a few minutes we came out on a level clearing with many barns and houses. Right beside us stood a great wooden building with many stories. The sunset glittered on the raindrops which hung on the cementing moss between the rough logs of the wall, and the window-panes glimmered as if lighted by countless chandeliers; but the door was locked, and no smoke came from the chimneys. The house was as a corpse with closed mouth and without breath, but with eyes hideously lighted by a cold gleam from without. Tied to a stake behind a straw-stack that had crookedly collapsed, a lean dog crept back and forth along the ground and wagged his tail when he saw us.

Long Jan went straight forward to the door and banged on it, but no one opened. Then he drew his blade and smashed in the nearest window with the hilt. At that moment we heard from within a frightened woman's voice shouting again and again to some one who was called Varvara. The broken glass fell tinkling, the leaden frame was bent on all sides into long hanging strips. Then running steps were heard in the house. The next moment the door was opened by a well-grown and stately serving-maid with a broad, light braid of hair down her back and a multitude of jingling silver pieces on her black hood and red and green bodice. In her hand she held an unlighted lantern, which in her terror she had presumably seized from habit.

"We'll do no harm," I said, trying as well as I could to explain myself in the bothersome speech. "Heaven forbid such a horror, most gracious young lady! But we are nearly starved and above all we require—"

"Dry clothes," broke in Long Jan, shivering.

That was the first time in the long wandering that I had heard this peculiar chap utter anything of his own accord, and then he had had the impudence into the bargain to take the word out of my mouth. When the girl turned around and left the door half open, he did indeed stand aside to give me place, but I remarked irritably: "The Herr Ensign will surely go first."

"God deliver me from any such thing," he answered, and smacked his boot-heels together. But, partly cheered by the peaceful reception, partly still angry, I added in such a sharp tone of voice that he could not doubt my seriousness: "Or else devil take the ensign!"

Then he dragged his long legs in through the door ahead of me and, as the house had no entry, we found ourselves at once in a large hall, where a heating-stove of variegated porcelain rose like a tower to the middle of the ceiling. Along the walls, which consisted entirely of rough-hewn logs caulked with moss, stood several black-varnished chairs, and on a shelf gleamed pots of pewter.

The serving-maid ran away and called Varvara, who finally appeared, dazed and frightened, in the farthest corner of the darkened hall. There the two girls tarried, whispering anxiously.

After a while, however, they grew easier; and they could not keep from giving each other a look and feeling more accommodating when I unexpectedly called them "gracious young ladies," and accordingly feigned not to understand that they were poor serfs. That was a drop of warm oil on the hard wax, and they now told us that the noble masters had gone away two weeks ago at the report of the Swedes' approach. They separately assured us that in the whole house, yes, in the whole place, there was nothing left of any value whatever, but that

they would gladly do their best to serve the strangers.

Varvara had pretty teeth, but she was too small and fat and black-fleeced, and after a while she let out such a piercing laugh that I was annoyed. The yellow-haired girl, who was called Katarina, on the other hand, I could not keep from pinching on the ear in fun, when she brought in wood to the stove. Meanwhile Long Jan had, without further ceremony, pulled off his tattered blue coat, and as he had neither shirt nor vest, he soon stood naked to the waist in all his miserable leanness, so that no one could keep serious any longer — no one but himself. Never had I seen a cheerful twitch pass over that stolid face. After we had each of us got a sheepskin coat and stilled the worst hunger with a little mashed turnip and kvass, we laid us down by the stove with broadswords between our knees, and I ventured to order the Herr Ensign to watch with me alternately, in case any one could possibly have any evil in mind. I also forbade the two serving-maids to leave the hall, and reading my prayers aloud in Swedish, entrusted us to the Almighty.

But! — The Almighty lets us human beings now and then give each other surprises. When no one addressed me, I went on sleeping for hours, till I was waked by a piercing warmth, which at other times I should have called a pain, but which now at least reminded me that I was no longer a wan-

dering skeleton, but a living man again. And still, who will not understand my terror when I saw the heated hall dark and empty, and heard shrieks and clamor from the room adjoining.

I at once took my broadsword and sprang to the door. There I saw a blazing cook-stove, and before it stood Long Jan in a checkered dressing-gown of bright silk and high-heeled shoes. Obviously the rascal had also skill in foraging, for a fowl sat already on the spit, and in a bubbling pot he threw, higgledy-piggledy, everything he could gather from the half-sobbing girls. In the midst of this he took out of a broken cupboard one splendid glass after another, smashed it to pieces on the edge of the fireplace, and threw the fragments on the floor. I went forward and took the lanky loon around the body, but was not in a condition to remove him from the spot. His incredible obstinacy gave a giant's strength to his slim body, and I was still exhausted by all the sufferings we had gone through. When he turned his face toward me, his eyes were glassily fixed, but I noticed a whiff of wine. Quite taken aback, I now let him go. He was drunk.

The yellow-haired Katarina, who really seemed much more amused than frightened, meanwhile came up to me and told me in her soft voice — ho! old Captain Höök was young in those days and a pretty fellow — . . . Where were we now? Oh, yes, she said that he had gone from room to room,

hunted through everything, and broken the vases and clocks. Finally, in the cellar he had searched through all the vaults except one — except one — one — one, to which the key was lost, she added hurriedly.

"But you, poor fellow, may also need something," she said to me, and pushed me into another room, which might have been called palatial. Around the walls hung woven greenish tapestries, on which Diana hunted a deer. The most splendid garments lay spread out over the slippery and shining floor; the armchairs were gilded, and beside a dish in the middle of the table stood mugs which were not filled with sickening kvass, not even with ale, but with a clear, yellow wine.

I, too, now lost my reason at the vision of all this magnificence, and my mistrust was somewhat eased because the two girls themselves seemed heartily delighted at having the chance to waste and destroy. They, too, felt themselves on hostile ground in the house where they had formerly had to go about as obedient and humble thralls. It was for them a moment of victory to be able to destroy the delicacies which they had never tasted, to throw themselves into proud reclining-chairs before which they had been forced to bow to the floor, and to trample on the costly garments which they had been scarcely deemed worthy to touch. They selected for me a coat of stiff cloth-of-silver, which

had tails spread out with whalebone so that they were like a swelling skirt; and I got stockings and red shoes on the feet from which that evening I had ripped the boots with difficulty. Just the same, I did not dare to throw off the broadsword from my body, because I could not altogether put aside all doubts as to an ambush.

With the wholly childlike frankness of a little heart-subduer Katarina clapped her hands, which in fact were neither white nor soft, and confessed that she felt really jolly, since with me, who was of the same class, they could be as they chose; whereas before the ensign, who was a fine gentleman, they always had to be careful.

I sat down to the table in one of the armchairs, which was nearly buried under my glittering coat tails, and on either side I invited one of the girls, and clinked glasses with them and drank.

"The Herr Ensign is of very high extraction," said I. "He will end as, it may be—yes, a councillor of state."—That was up to then my most unseasonable remark, because people who wield the pen—"But the gracious young ladies know that the highborn sometimes, by an unlucky hap, may be born both foolish and simple-witted, and it is therefore that I regard myself obliged sometimes to screw up his wits a little into the right groove, so to speak."

I have always had a fault as a soldier. I have

been able both to hack and to hew at the right time, but in the very act I have been too good-natured and accommodating. Therefore, too, I let Long Jan rummage in the kitchen however he chose, while I myself ate and drank to my heart's content. But with every gulp I felt how the wine kept on taking away my wits. That I did not become more forward than I was toward my merry hostesses depended less on the virtue with which the Almighty has sometimes wisely endowed beauty than on the hardships I had gone through, which quickly enough changed the wine into a sleeping potion. Reflection told me that I should push the mug aside, but, in addition to the distress of the last days, the wine was irresistible. I fell asleep sitting with hands crossed over the pommel of my sword.

"Now I hear tiptoeing steps," said I to myself in my dreams. "They are coming yet nearer behind my chair. Now I must draw steel. But what's that! I can move neither hand nor foot, though I am so much awake that I can see Diana and her greyhounds on the tapestry. All the air is dancing vapor, which rustles around the faces of the prattling girls and the flames of the waxlights. I am helplessly drunk. Of that there is no doubt, but now I am asleep again, and there's a tiptoeing behind my chair. A hidden serf stands there with his axe. Even now he's lifting it. The next instant I shall

feel it as a lightning-flash through my head—and then all's over. Why won't the chair stand still? I can't hold myself on, if you jump. Whoa, there, Whiteface! I'd have you know there's nothing in the world that can scare me. But to hold myself on, sitting backward on the loins of one of the king's galloping chargers—that I can't. . . . Bang! Look there! Now I'm lying there in the middle of the stone pavement. . . . Fie! What are you laughing for? And then the vault in the cellar. . . . Why did you say just now that there was one . . . one . . . one two, one two, one two, lads in blue, two three, in grief and glee, three four, their land adore, four five, and boldly strive, five six, for Carolus Rex."

Finally I raised myself on my aching elbow and sang the whole of Psalm Number Six from the first to the last verse, and that with such a powerful voice that it seemed to me as if everything evil must have shrunk away in terror.

Many times have I treated myself to a booze, but never one that gave me worse agony. When I awoke in the morning, I sprang at once from the floor, where I was lying at full length on my back by the chair. I was still so sure of an ambush that I was wholly surprised when I found both the girls sleeping on a sheepskin under the table, on which a light was burning in the socket. Out in the kitchen I heard strange voices and came there upon an old

one-eyed witch who was called Natalia, and a shaggy serf who was called Makar, and who to the smallest detail resembled the man of whom I had dreamed. They confessed that they had kept themselves hidden in the attic, but had now crept out when they noted that we intended no harm. They related that in the neighboring village there had also been several families during the night, but that at the report of our coming these had straightway loaded their belongings on a wagon and driven off at a gallop.

For the first time now I could honestly feel myself free from all apprehension, and with joy I went back to the hall, bent over the girls, and kissed Katarina both vigorously and long.

She woke up and laughed and turned over on her side to sleep further, but I kissed her yet again, and then she defended herself and jumped up, brisk and cheerful.

"You are a fine girl, Katarina, and I don't need to mistrust you any longer," said I. "Fetch me a little fresh water now and some salt."

While she came and went to set out my breakfast I often took her about her none too slender waist, and kissed her. At last she kissed me back, too, and leaned against the cloth-of-silver on my breast, and cried and laughed alternately. We went back and forth through the many rooms, but at a certain door she always checked herself, because back of it the ensign had been pleased to go to rest

in one of the noble master's own down beds. Finally we sat down in a yellow reclining-chair, and I took her on my knee and wound her thick plait about my wrist. It was no falsehood either when I whispered into her ear that my hardened soldier's heart had seldom beaten more warmly.

I think with regret of the happy days that followed, and rather than recall them hour by hour, I leave it to you, especially to the young ones, to make use of your imaginations. Still, I always set Makar every evening as a guard before the house and never left off my broadsword. Sometimes Katarina in play would pull it from me, hold it out with both hands on the hilt, and go tramping through the rooms, while the autumn rain beat on the window-panes. The loosely suspended tapestries were set in motion by the draught she made, so that the pictures seemed to breathe and bow. There was an echo every time when, with her black hat pulled down like an old-fashioned morion, she shouted her "Forward!" Then I built barricades of tables and gilded leather chairs, until in the midst of the assault I leaped forth and overpowered both the amazon and her weapon. I had no longer any thought of my comrades, who meanwhile were perhaps hungering and bleeding, and my only wish was always to stay where I now found myself.

Katarina always smelt of lavender. We had barred off a corner room for our share of the house,

and thither she carried her big chest, which was entirely plastered over with blue-checkered paper. This contained her clothes and other belongings, and it never was opened without filling the room with lavender scent. It was her favorite diversion to lie on her knees in front of the chest, pull out all her garments with a multitude of small boxes and receptacles, and then pack them in again with the greatest care. When I found that too tedious, or the room sometimes grew too cold, I persuaded her to go out with me to the great hall, where we sat down by the stove. Then I tried to fasten her attention by telling the life history of my long broadsword, which I did not shorten by a word. I knew for sure that it had the death of eleven men on its conscience, and on my arm I could show scars both of bullet-grazes and cuts. But she did not ask much about them. If I told the saga of Prince Gideon of Maxibrander, she grew impatient. "That is something that never happened," she said, and began eagerly to sew together green and red scallops of cloth on two fur boots, which were clearly intended to become a masterpiece of their kind.

The Herr Ensign lived in a continual booze and showed for the women the most open disdain. Katarina found this, too, very fortunate, she confessed, because it was so hard for a person in her class to reprove so high a gentleman, if he became attentive. One morning, in the midst of this, Herr

Ensign called to mind the locked vault down in the cellar, which we had both forgotten. He went straightway there, and Katarina grew so beside herself with alarm that she could not conceal it. Pressing both my hands, she begged and prayed me to hold him back, and so completely was I then the prisoner of my heart that, although all my previous doubts awoke to life again, I let myself be forced to seek help for her.

We went down after Herr Ensign into the lighted cellar, where he was already absorbed in breaking open a locked wooden door.

"Let that alone!" I commanded him, and he assented, but kept on, nevertheless, with his immovable stubbornness, breaking and prying.

Then I excused myself before my wailing followers with the plea that a common soldier such as I could not command an officer—and at that moment the door gave way.

Within the vault a lamp burned under a gilded Russian Madonna, and beside a table with various sorts of food stood a made-up bed. Between the bed and the wall moved something round and dark, which, when we went nearer, showed itself to be the bent back of an old man. When the old man saw himself unearthed, he crept forward, embraced Herr Ensign's knees, and begged and conjured him to give pardon. He admitted that he was the mas-

ter of the house and that he had concealed himself after he had sent away his family, but promised to be our most humble servant if we had pity on his life.

"Be easy!" answered I, and helped the tottering old fellow up from the ground. "But then you shall be our drummer when we go to table."

When we ate that evening in the great hall, Herr Ensign as usual had the splendid chair, and beside him sat I and Katarina. At a table a little to the left stood the white-bearded and trembling master of the house with a brass mortar, and Makar with two pot-lids. They made their cooking utensils thunder in time to the melancholy folk-songs which ugly old Natalia sang, as she sat between the two on the edge of the table.

I don't know why, but her wailing voice gradually robbed me of all my brisk gayety, and I began to think of my thousands upon thousands of absent comrades. I had between my vest and shirt a whole packet of letters which anxious relatives had written to their dear ones in the field, and which they had begged me to deliver to them, if I ever should get on to the king's camp. I drew the letters from my bosom. They were not secret, for I had received many of them unsealed on my last evening at Riga. I pushed the candlestick nearer, eyed by chance a letter written in uncertain style, and read:

Give this into the hands of John.

My dere son:—

Receive thy father's blessing, though separated from him by both land and watter, and right nere the heathenish parts of the urth, where crocodiles, scorpions and other harmful crawling things strike fere. . . .

I drew a wry face, mayhap, but I felt my sacred responsibility, and my mind grew all the heavier. I noticed that Katarina pressed my foot more energetically than usual, but I pressed back and thought that it was only a love token. When at last I had laid the letters together, I discovered that she sat quite pale, and could not take any wine or food. I bent a little to one side, so that she might be able to whisper, but the old gentleman at the table stared at her unexpectedly, while he the more eagerly let his blows ring on the brass mortar, which he held out like a bell.

I remained in doubt and did not know rightly what trick I should invent. Then I trumped up the excuse that I was freezing. I went into the sleeping-room and, after pretending to search in the dark awhile, called, "Katarina, my girl, where have you put the sheepskin coat?"

When she came in, she rushed straight up to me and threw herself on my neck with stifled sobbing.

"You didn't hear," she whispered, "that Makar just now in the midst of the noise told the master that he had got together more than sixty of the serfs, and that, as soon as he gives them a signal by breaking the window in the great hall, they are coming in to cut down both of you."

I remained fairly cool and sought to console her, but, choked with weeping, she told how she herself at the beginning was with the rest in wanting to entice us into a trap, but that she now no longer believed she could live on a day without me.

I pressed her to me hard and kissed her burning mouth and throbbing temples, and yet in that moment a strange repose fell upon my soul. My acquaintance with her became all at once nearly as something in the past. I have since, in my gray years, regretted this bitterly and wondered at myself, who at that especial moment had so little to give her. Reading the letter, the sudden danger . . . I don't know fully which was most to blame. To be sure, it depended on both.

"If I could take you along," I stammered.

She shook her head, as I could very clearly perceive in the half-light from the open door, and drew me instead to the window, where she begged me to steal off. Then I lashed myself into a sort of pretended anger, threw her from me over the polished floor, and cried with raised voice, "For whom do you take me, lass?"

With that I drew my broadsword and went out into the great hall, and when Herr Ensign got sight of me so, he rose from the table directly and also drew.

Then the master raised the mortar to throw it at the misty window-pane, but we stood right in front of him with our weapons, and his shaking knees became all the more bowed. He grew shorter and shorter, and the pestle rang between his fingers. Natalia crossed herself in silence, and Makar, who saw his master ready to sink, supported him from behind under the elbows and let the pot-lids fall clattering to the floor. Every now and then he tried to snatch the pestle to throw it at the window-pane, but then the old man shut his hand around the shaft without daring to let it go.

So we stood a long while facing one another, and we heard the kettle purr in the kitchen.

But soon we heard also the tap of steps, for the serfs had spied through the window from without and seen all. The kitchen door was filled with dirt-gray sheepskin coats, on which a bright button glinted here and there. Then a shot rang out and blew the smoke over the shaggy hides.

Now I wholly forgot our ensign game and shoved Long Jan aside so as to go at them for life and death, but just at this moment, even better than at any other time, was I to learn whom I had for a comrade. He stood still, obstinate as ever, seized me

around both arms and swung me aside with the irresistible strength which his thin limbs gathered, I don't know from where.

"Ensign," said he, "if you have made yourself a private and me the ensign, then you ought also to know our custom in war that an officer goes first into the firing."

Like a thunderbolt he burst in among the sheepskin coats, and with his great flat hands held the blade that with one blow cut the lintel over his neck and with another peeled off the poor wretches' hides and clothes. I heard yet another shot, and saw axes and hay-forks. His right arm twitched and grew bloody, and he could now only wield his weapon with the other, but I was at his side, hewing and thrusting.

We were forced into one corner of the kitchen, and my inflated fool's mantle of cloth-of-silver was cut to pieces so that the black stubs of whalebone stuck out through the holes. Blackened with smoke so that he was unrecognizable, Long Jan tottered against my shoulder, and I took him by his uninjured hand and squeezed it in brotherly fashion with the words, "Now I've learned what you amount to, Jan, and if we get out of this, we shall nevermore leave each other."

He answered nothing. One eye was shut, the other was staring wide, and he fell heavily in front of me to the floor.

That was the last time I saw Long Jan, at whom I had so often laughed, and who had so often vexed me, but to whom I was now glad to offer the respectful grasp of a friend and an equal.

For a moment I sought involuntarily to defend his body, but gradually I perceived it would be useless in that last forlorn hope. A moment later I was groping around once more amid underbrush and mud, wet through with rain, and with a wound over one dexter finger.

I had, however, the luck to stumble upon a detail of twenty other wandering Swedes, and climbed up in a fir-tree to get with my eye to the kernel of the far-stretching glow that tinted the lowering sky above the wood.

"What do you see?" asked my comrades.

"I see pitch-black darkness. But if I shut my eyes, I see still more. Then I see before me a hostile camp. Below me I see the soggy turf, which sucks hard about our feet, greedy for the honor of being the death-bed of a few poor wretches. Behind me I see the miles on miles of wilderness, where our brothers' corpses grow yellow beneath the fallen October leaves, where no hens cluck before the burnt homesteads, and no horse can find any food except the bark of twigs. But still farther away lies the sea, and beyond that I see a long road with tumble-down fences that climbs up to an old red-painted homestead. Within there, the

turnips have just been taken from the table, and while the venerable old man opens his leather Bible, where a black cock's feather lies as marker to the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, he falls into musing and wonders if we perchance have by now got ahead with reinforcements to the king's camp, and if his dear boy may now be reading by the fire his half illegible letter."

Certainly I did n't say all this at that time, but I know that I thought it. Katarina was already an almost silenced memory.

"What do you see now?" asked my comrades. "You have climbed higher up."

Across the trees I saw beacons or camp-fires hanging within the yellow mist like lumps of melted iron, and as I strained my eyes, the row of gray tent-roofs in the light of the pitch beacons reminded me of a misty coast-line.

"That glow," I whispered to my comrades, "is a great apple with many kernels, and we need to have our swords ready. But wait! that was not Russian. Did n't you hear the two outposts who called to each other? As sure as I live was not that our own beloved mother-speech? If I did n't seven times hear 'devil,' may the devil take me!"

How did I come down from the fir? That I hardly remember. On all sides I shook outstretched hands and moved between blue and yellow coats from embrace to embrace. How many longed-for

embraces did I not have to give, how many adventures to describe! I went about ever further into the camp, sometimes carried, sometimes dragged, sometimes met with ringing laughter, as they got sight of my ragged fool's-mantle, round which the projecting whalebones shook with every motion. Within me was a roar of joy.

"I have a letter to Captain Bagge," I shouted.

"Shot long ago."

"I have also a letter to Cederstjerne, Lieutenant."

"Shot."

I stumbled over a dead horse, which with its stiffened grin was almost scorched by a smouldering fire of logs. The rain had quenched the flames, and in the illuminated smoke behind the embers I saw a seated circle of grim-looking officers. Among them lay on the ground at full length a man with a fur hood drawn down and a cape collar over his face. I wanted to step over him and waved my packet of letters, but a hand seized me by the shoulder and I was harshly stopped short by the words, "Are you out of your wits? Don't you see it is His Majesty?"

Then I struck my heels together as I raised the hand with the packet to my head, and the tears that burst forth ran down my cheeks.

Captain Höök arose and finished his story as he

bade good-night, but when he went out into the entry, the others heard that he remained standing on the winding stair.

Then one of the servant-girls drew her holiday jacket about her and loosened the last stump of one branch candle from the round table. As she carried it, she held one hand underneath, so that no grease should fall on the straw. Thereupon she went out carefully to light the captain, for they all knew that he, a Charles man, was so afraid of the dark that he never dared go alone across the attic.

## *The Fortified House*

SURPRISED by the winter cold, the Swedes in crowded confusion had taken up their quarters behind the walls of Hadjash. Soon there was not a house to be found that was not filled with the frost-bitten and the dying. Cries of distress were heard out in the street, and here and there beside the steps lay amputated fingers, feet, and legs. Vehicles stood fastened to each other, so tightly packed from the city gate to the market-place that the chilly-pale soldiers, who streamed in from all sides, had to crawl between the wheels and runners. Buckled in their harness and turned away from the wind, the horses, their loins white with frost, had already stood many days without food. No one took care of them, and several of the drivers sat frozen to death with hands stuck into their sleeves. Some wagons were like oblong boxes or coffins, where from the chink of the flat lid stared out mournful faces, which read in a prayer-book or gazed longingly with feverish delirium at the sheltering houses. A thousand unfortunates, in muffled tones or silently, cried to God for mercy. Under the sheltered side of the city wall dead soldiers stood in lines, many with red Cossack coats buttoned over their ragged Swedish uniforms and with sheepskins around their naked feet. Wood-doves and sparrows, which were so stiff with frost that they could be caught with the hand, had fallen

on the hats and shoulders of the standing corpses, and fluttered their wings when the chaplains went by to give a Last Communion in brandy.

Up at the market-place among burnt areas stood an unusually large house, from which could be heard loud voices. A soldier delivered a fagot to an ensign who stood in the doorway, and when the soldier went back into the street, he shrugged his shoulders and said to whomsoever cared to hear him: "It's only the gentlemen quarreling in the chancellery."

The ensign at the door had lately arrived with Lewenhaupt's forces. He carried the fagot into the room, and threw it down by the fireplace. The voices within ceased immediately, but as soon as he had closed the door, they began with renewed heat.

It was His Excellency Piper who stood in the middle of the floor, his countenance wrinkled and furrowed, with glowing cheeks and trembling nostrils.

"I say that the whole affair is madness," he burst out, "madness, madness!"

Hermelin, with his pointed nose, was constantly twitching his eyes and his hands, while he sprang back and forth in the room like a tame rat; but Field Marshal Rehnskiöld, who, with his handsome, stately figure, was standing by the fireplace, only whistled and hummed. If he had not whistled and hummed, the quarrel would have been finished by this time, because for once they were all fully

agreed; but the fact that he whistled and hummed instead of being silent or at least speaking, that could be endured no longer. Lewenhaupt at the window took snuff and snapped shut his snuff-box. His pepper-brown eyes protruded from his head, and it looked as if his comical peruke became ever bigger and bigger. If Rehnskiöld had not continued to whistle and hum, he would have controlled himself to-day as yesterday and on all other occasions, but now wrath rose to his brow.

He shut his snuff-box for the last time, and mumbled between his teeth, "I do not ask that His Majesty should understand statesmanship. But can he lead troops? Does he show real insight at a single encounter or attack? Trained and proved old warriors, who never can be replaced, he offers daily for an empty bravado. If our men are to storm a wall, it is considered superfluous that they bind themselves protecting fagots or shields, and therefore they are wretchedly massacred. To speak freely, my worthy sirs, I can forgive an Uppsala student many a boyish freak, but I demand otherwise of a general in the field. Truly it avails not to carry on a campaign under the command of such a master."

"Furthermore," continued Piper, "His Majesty does not at present incommode you, general, with any particularly hard command. At the beginning, before one man had succeeded in distinguishing

himself more than another, it went better; but now His Majesty goes around mediating and reconciling with a foolish smile so that one could go crazy."

He raised his arms in the air with a wrath which had lost all sense and bounds, notwithstanding he was altogether at one with Lewenhaupt. While he was still speaking, he turned about and betook himself impetuously to the inner apartments. The door slammed with such a clatter that Rehnskiöld found himself yet more called upon to whistle and hum. If he only had chosen to say something! But no, he did not. Gyllenkrook, who sat at the table and examined departure-checks, was blazing in the face, and a little withered-looking officer at his side whispered venomously into his ear: "A pair of diamond earrings given to Piper's countess might perhaps even yet help Lewenhaupt to new appointments."

If Rehnskiöld had now ceased to whistle and hum, Lewenhaupt would still have been able to control himself, to take up the roll of papers he carried under his coat and sit down at a corner of the table; but instead, the venerable and at other times taciturn man grew worse and worse. He turned about undecidedly and went toward the entrance door, but there he suddenly stood still, drew himself up, and smacked his heels together as if he had been a mere private. Now Rehnskiöld became quiet. The door opened. An icy gust of

wind rushed into the room, and the ensign announced with as loud and long-drawn a voice as a sentry who calls his comrades to arms: "Hi–s Majesty!"

The king was no longer the dazzled and wondering half-grown youth of aforetime. Only the boyish figure with the narrow shoulders was the same. His coat was sooty and dirty. The wrinkle around the short, protruding upper lip had become deeper and rather morose. On the nose and one cheek he had frost-bite, and his eyelids were red-edged and swollen with protracted cold, but around the formerly bald vertex of his head the combed-back hair stood up like a pointed crown.

He held a fur cap in both hands, and tried to conceal his embarrassment and diffidence behind a stiff and cold ceremoniousness, while bowing and smiling to each and all of those present.

They bowed again and again still more deeply, and when he had advanced to the middle of the floor, he stood still and bowed awkwardly toward the sides, though with somewhat more haste, being apparently wholly occupied with what he was about to say. Thereupon he remained a long while standing quite silent.

Then he went forward to Rehnskiöld and, with a brief inclination, took him by one of his coat buttons.

"I would beg," he said, "that Your Excellency

provide me with two or three men of the common soldiers as escort for a little excursion. I have already two dragoons with me."

"But, Your Majesty! the country is overrun with Cossacks. To ride in here to the city from Your Majesty's quarters with so small an escort was already a feat of daring."

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense! Your Excellency will do as I have said. Some one of the generals present, who is at leisure, may also mount and take one of his men."

Lewenhaupt bowed.

The king regarded him a trifle irresolutely without answering, and remained standing after Rehnskiöld hastened out. None of the others in the circle considered it necessary to break the silence or to move.

Only after a very long pause did the king bow again to every one separately, and go out into the open air.

"Well?" inquired Lewenhaupt and clapped the ensign on the shoulder with a return of his natural kindliness. "The ensign shall go along! This is the first time the ensign has stood eye to eye with His Majesty."

"I had never expected he would be like that."

"He is always like that. He is too kingly to command."

They followed after the king, who clambered over

wagons and fallen animals. His motions were agile, never abrupt, but measured and quite slow, so that he never for a moment lost his dignity. When he had finally made his way forward through the throng to the city gate, he mounted to the saddle with his attendants, who were now seven men.

The horses stumbled on the icy street, and some fell, but Lewenhaupt's remonstrances only induced the king to use his spurs yet more heartlessly. The lackey Hultman had read aloud to him all night or had related sagas, and had at length coaxed him into laughing at the prophecy that, had he not been exalted by God to be a king, he would for his whole life have become an unsociable floor-pacer, who devised much more wonderful verses than those of the late Messenius of Disa on Bollhus, but especially the mightiest battle stories. He tried to think of Rolf Gotriksson, who ever rode foremost of all his men, but to-day it did not please him to bound his thoughts within the play-room of a saga. The restlessness, which during the last few days had struck its claws into his mind, would not let go of its royal prey. At the chancellery he had just seen the heated faces. Ever since the pranks of his boyhood he had been wrapt in his own imaginary world of the past. He had sat deaf to the piercing cries of distress along the way, while he became distrustful of each and all who exhibited a more sensitive hearing. To-day, as at other times, he hardly noted that they offered

him the best-rested horse and the freshest cake of bread, that in the morning they laid a purse with five hundred ducats in his pocket, that the horsemen at the first *mêlée* would form a ring about him and offer themselves to that death which he had challenged. On the other hand, he noticed that the soldiers saluted him with gloomy silence, and misfortunes had made him suspicious even of those nearest to him. The most cautious opposition, the most concealed disapproval, he made a note of without betraying himself, and every word remained and gnawed at his soul. Every hour it seemed to him that he lost an officer on whom he had formerly relied, and his heart became all the colder. His thwarted ambition chafed and bled under the weight of failure, and he breathed more lightly the farther behind him he left his headquarters.

Suddenly Lewenhaupt came to a stand, debating within himself how to exercise an influence upon the king.

"My heroic Ajax!" said he, and patted his steaming horse, "you are indeed an old manger-biter, but I have no right to founder you for no good cause, and I myself am beginning to get on in years as you are. But in Jesus' name, lads, let him who can follow the king!"

When he saw the ensign's anxious sidelong look toward the king, he spoke with lowered voice: "Be faithful, boy! His Majesty does not roar

out as we others do. He is too kingly to chide or bicker."

The king feigned to notice nothing. More and more wildly over ice and snow he kept up the silent horse-race without goal or purpose. He had now only four attendants. After another hour one of the remaining horses fell with a broken fore-leg, and the rider out of pity shot a bullet through its ear, after which he himself, alone and on foot, went to meet an uncertain fate in the cold.

At last the ensign was the only man who was able to follow the king, and they had now come among bushes and saplings, where they could proceed but at a foot-pace. On the hill above them rose a gray and sooty house with narrow grated windows, the courtyard being surrounded by a wall.

At this moment there was a shot.

"How was that?" inquired the king, and looked around.

"The pellet piped nastily when it went by my ear, but it only bit the corner of my hat," answered the ensign, without the least experience of how he ought to conduct himself before the king. He had a slight Småland accent, and laughed contentedly with his whole blond countenance.

Enchanted by the good fortune of being man by man with him whom he regarded as above all other living human beings, he continued: "Shall we then go up there and take them by the beard?"

The answer pleased the king in the highest degree, and with a leap he stood on the ground.

"We 'll tie our steeds here in the bushes," he said, exhilarated and with bright color on his cheek. "Afterwards let us go up and run them all through as easily as whistling."

They left the panting horses and, bending forward, climbed up the hill among the bushes. Over the wall looked down several Cossack heads with hanging hair, yellow and grinning as those of beheaded criminals.

"Look!" whispered the king, and smote his hands together. "They 're trying to pull shut the rotten gate, the fox-tails!"

His glance, but recently so expressionless, became now flickering and anon open and shining. He drew his broadsword and raised it with both hands above his head. Like a young man's god he stormed in through the half-open door. The ensign, who cut and thrust by his side, was often close to being struck from behind by his weapon. A musket-shot blackened the king's right temple. Four men were cut down in the gateway, and the fifth of the band fled with a fire-shovel into the courtyard, pursued by the king.

Then the king wiped off the blood from his sword on the snow, while he laid two ducats in the Cossack's shovel and burst out with rising spirits, "It is no pleasure to fight with these wretches

who never strike back and only run. Come back when you have bought yourself a decent sword."

The Cossack, who understood nothing, stared at the gold-pieces, sneaked along the wall to the gate, and fled. Ever farther and farther away on the plain he called his roving comrades with a dismal and lamenting "Oohaho! Oohaho!"

The king hummed to himself as if chaffing with an unseen enemy: "Little Cossack man, little Cossack man, go gather up your rascals!"

The walls around the courtyard were moulder-ing and black. From the wilderness sounded an endlessly prolonged minor tone as from an aeolian harp, and the king inquisitively shouldered in the door of the dwelling-house. This consisted of a single large and half-dark room, and before the fire-place lay a heap of blood-stained clothing, which plunderers of corpses had taken from fallen Swedes. The door was thrown shut again by the cross-draught, and the king went to the stable-buildings at the side. There was no door there, and a sound was now heard the more plainly. Within in the dark-ness lay a starved white horse bound to an iron ring in the wall.

A lifted broadsword would not have checked the king, but the uncertain dusk caused the man of imagination to stand on the threshold, fearful of the dark. Yet he gave no sign of this, but beckoned the ensign. They stepped in down a steep stairway

to a cellar. Here there was a well, and at the arm of the creaking windlass that brought up the water, a deaf Cossack, wholly unaware of danger, was driving around with whip and reins a human figure in the uniform of a Swedish officer.

When they had loosed the rope and had bound the Cossack in the place of the prisoner, they recognized the Holsteiner, Feuerhausen, who had served as major in a regiment of dragoon recruits, but had been cut off by the Cossacks and harnessed as a draught animal for hoisting water.

He fell on his knees, and stammered in broken Swedish: "Your Majesty! I gan't pelief my eyes . . . My gratitude — " . . .

The king cheerily interrupted his talk, and turned to the ensign: "Bring up the two horses to the stable! Three men cannot ride comfortably on two horses, and therefore we shall stay here till a few Cossacks come by, from whom we can take a new horse. Do you, sir, stand guard at the gate."

After that the king went back to the dwelling-house, and shut the door after him. The horses which, desperate with hunger, had been greedily gnawing the bark from the bushes, were meanwhile led up to the stable, and the ensign mounted guard.

Slowly the hours went by. When it began to draw towards dusk, the storm increased in bitterness, and in the light of sunset the snow whirled over the desolate snow-plain. Deathly yellow Cos-

sack faces raised themselves spying above the bushes, and borne in the wind sounded the roving plunderers' "Oohaho! Oohaho! Oohaho!"

Then Feuerhausen stepped out of the stable, where he had sat between the horses so as not to get frost in his wounds from the ropes with which he had been bound. He went forward to the barred doors of the dwelling-house.

"Your Majesty!" he stammered, "the Cossacks are gathering more and more, and darkness is coming soon. I and the ensign can both sit on one horse. If we delay here, this night will be Your Mightiest Majesty's last, which Gott in His secret dispensation forbit!"

The king answered from within, "It must be as we said. Three men do not ride comfortably on two horses."

The Holsteiner shook his head and went down to the ensign.

"Such is His Majesty, you damt Swedes. From the stable I heard him walk and walk back and forvart. Sickness and conscience-torture will come. Like a *pater familiae* the Muscovite czar stands among his subjects. A confectioner he sets up as his friend, and a simple servant-girl he raises to his glorious imperial throne. Detestable are his gestures when he gets drunk, and he treats women *à la françois;* but his first and last wort always runs, 'For Russia's goot!' King Carolus leafs his lants as

smoking ash-heaps, and does not possess a single frient, not efen among his nearest. King Carolus is more lonely than the meanest wagon-drifer. He has not once a comrade's knee to weep on. Among nobles and fine ladies and perukes he comes like a spectre out of a thousant-year mausoleum — and spectres mostly go about witout company. Is he a man of state? Oh, haf mercy! No sense for the public. Is he a general? Good-by! No sense for the big masses. Only to make bridges and set up gabions, clap his hants at captured flags and a couple of kettledrums. No sense for state and army, only for men."

"That may be also a sense," replied the ensign.

He walked vigorously back and forward, for his fingers were already so stiff with cold that he scarcely could hold his drawn blade.

The Holsteiner shifted the ragged coat-collar around his cheeks and went on with muffled voice and eager gestures: "King Carolus laughs with delight when the bridge breaks, and men and beasts are miserably drownt. No heart in his breast. To the deuce wit him! King Carolus is such a little Swedish half-genius as wanders out in the worlt and beats the drum and parades and makes a fiasco, and the parterre whistles, Whee!"

"And that is why the Swedes go to death for him," answered the ensign; "that is just why."

"Not angry, my dearest fellow! Your teeth shone so in a laugh when we first met."

"I like to hear the Herr Major talk, but I 'm freezing. Will not the major go up and listen at the king's door?"

The Holsteiner went up to the door and listened. When he came back, he said, "He only walks and walks, and sighs heavily like a man in anguish of soul. So it always is now, they say. His Majesty nefer sleeps any more at night. The comedy-actor knows he is not up to his part, and of all life's torments wounded ambition becomes the bitterest."

"Then it should also be the last for us to jest at. Dare I beg the major to rub my right hand with snow; it is getting numb."

The Holsteiner did as he desired, and turned back to the king's door. He struck his forehead with both hands. His gray-sprinkled, bushy moustaches stood straight out, and he mumbled, "Gott, Gott! Soon it will be too dark to retreat."

The ensign called, "Good sir, I should like to ask if you would rub my face with snow. My cheeks are freezing stiff. Of the pain in my foot I will not speak. Ah, I can't bear it."

The Holsteiner filled his hands with snow. "Let me stand guard," he said, "only for an hour."

"No, no. The king has commanded that I stay here at the entrance."

"Och, the king! I know him. I will make him cheerful, talk philosophy, tell of gallant exploits. He is always amused to hear of a lover who climbs adventurously through a window. He often looks at the beautiful side of womankint. That appeals to his imagination, but not to his flesh, for he is witout feeling. Ant he is bashful. If the fair one ever wishes to tread him under her silken shoe, she must herself attack, but pretent to flee, and all the others must strive against the *liaison*. The most mighty lady, his grandmother, spoiled everything with her shriek of 'Marriage, marriage!' King Carolus is from top to toe like the Swedish queen Christina, though he is genuinely masculine. The two should have married each other on the same throne. That would haf been a fine little pair. Oh, pfui, pfui! you Swedes. If a man gallops his horses and lets people and kingdom be massacred, he is still purehearted and supreme among all, if only his bloot is too slow for amours. Oh, excuse me! I know purehearted heroes who were faithfully in love with two, three different maidens or wives in one and the same week."

"Yes, we are so, we are so. But for Christ's pity you must rub my hand again. And excuse my moaning and groaning!"

Just inside the gate, which could not be shut, lay the fallen Cossacks, white as marble with the hoar frost. The yellow sky became gray, and ever

nearer and more manifold in the twilight sounded the wailing cries, "Oohaho! Oohaho! Oohaho!"

Now the king opened his door and came down across the court.

The pains in his head, from which he had begun to suffer, had been increased by his ride in the wind and made his glance heavy. His countenance bore traces of lonely soul-strife, but as he drew near, his mouth resumed its usual embarrassed smile. His temple was still blackened after the musket-shot.

"It 's freshening up," he said, and producing from his coat a loaf of bread, he broke it in three, so that every one had as large a piece as he did. After that, he lifted off his riding-cape, and fastened it himself about the shoulders of the sentinel ensign.

Abashed over his own conduct, he then took the Holsteiner forcibly by the arm and led him up through the courtyard, while they chewed at their hard bread.

Now, if ever, thought the Holsteiner, is the time to win the king's attention with a clever turn of speech, and afterwards talk sense with him.

"The accommodation might be worse," he began, at the same time biting and chewing. "Ah, good old days! That reminds me of a gallant adventure outside of Dresden."

The king kept on holding him by the arm, and the Holsteiner lowered his voice. The story was lively and salacious, and the king grew inquisitive.

The coarsest allusions always lured out his set smile. He listened with a despairing and half-absent man's need of momentary diversion.

Only when the Holsteiner with cunning deftness began to shift the conversation over to some words about their immediate danger did the king again become serious.

"Bagatelle, bagatelle!" he replied. "It is nothing at all worth mentioning, except that we must behave ourselves well and sustain our reputation to the last man. If the rascals come on, we will all three place ourselves at the gate and pink them with our swords."

The Holsteiner stroked his forehead and felt around. He began to talk about the stars that were just shining out. He set forth a theory for measuring their distance from the earth. The king now listened to him with a quite different sort of attention. He broke into the question keenly, resourcefully, and with an unwearied desire to think out new, surprising methods in his own way. One assertion gave a hand to another, and soon the conversation dwelt on the universe and the immortality of the soul, to return afresh to the stars. More and more of them flickered in the heavens, and the king described what he knew about the sun-dial. He stood up his broadsword with its scabbard in the snow and directed the point toward the Polestar, so that next morning they might be able to tell the time.

"The heart of the universe," he said, "must be either the earth or the star that stands over the land of the Swedes. No land must be of more account than the Swedish land."

Outside the wall the Cossacks were calling out, but as soon as the Holsteiner led the talk to their threatened attack, the king was laconic.

"At daybreak we shall betake ourselves back to Hadjash," said he. "Before then we can hardly secure a third horse, so that each of us can ride comfortably in his own saddle."

After he had spoken in that strain, he went back into the dwelling-house.

The Holsteiner came down with a vehement stride to the ensign, and pointing at the king's door, he cried out, "Forgif me, ensign. We Germans don't mince words when a wount oozes after a rope, but I lay down my arms and gif you, sir, the victory, because I also could shed my bloot for the man. Do I lofe him! No one efer understands him that has not seen him. But, ensign, you cannot stay any longer out in the weather."

The ensign replied, "No cape has warmed me more sweetly than the one I now wear, and I lay all my cares on Christ. But in God's name, major, go back to the door and listen! The king might do himself some harm."

"His Majesty would not fall on his *own* sword, but longs for another's."

"Now I hear his steps even down here. They are getting still more violent and restless. He is so lonely. When I saw him in Hadjash bowing and bowing among the generals, I could only think, How lonely he is!"

"If the little Holsteiner slips away from here alife, he will always remember the steps we heard to-night and always call this refuge Fort Garten."

The ensign nodded his approval and answered, "Go to the stable, major, and seek rest and shelter awhile between the horses. And there through the walls you can better hear the king and watch over him."

Thereupon the ensign began to sing with resonant voice:

*O Father, to Thy loving grace . . .*

The Holsteiner went back across the court into the stable and, his voice quavering with cold, intoned with the other:

*In every time and every place*
*My poor weak soul would I commend.*
*O Lord, receive it and defend.*

"Oohaho! Oohaho!" answered the Cossacks in the storm, and it was already night.

The Holsteiner squeezed himself in between the two horses, and listened till weariness and sleep bowed his head. Only at dawn was he wakened by a clamor. He sprang out into the open air, and be-

held the king already standing in the court, looking at the sword that had been set up as a sun-dial.

By the gate the Cossacks had collected, but when they saw the motionless sentry, they shrank back in superstitious fear and thought of the rumors concerning the magic of the Swedish soldiers against blow and shot.

When the Holsteiner had gotten forward to the ensign, he grasped him hard by the arm.

"What now?" he asked. "Brandy?"

At the same instant he let go his grip.

The ensign stood frozen to death with his back against the wall of the gate, his hands on his sword-hilt, and wrapped in the king's cloak.

"Since we are now only two," the king remarked, drawing his weapon out of the snow, "we can at once betake ourselves each to his horse, as it was arranged."

The Holsteiner stared him right in the eyes with reawakened hate and remained standing, as if he had heard nothing. Finally, however, he led out the horses, but his hands trembled and clenched themselves, so that he could hardly draw the saddle-girths.

The Cossacks swung their sabres and pikes, but the sentry stood at his post.

Then the king sprang carelessly into the saddle, and set his horse to a gallop. His forehead was clear, his cheeks were rosy, and his broadsword glimmered like a sunbeam.

The Holsteiner looked after him. His bitter expression relaxed, and he murmured between his teeth, while he too mounted to the saddle and with hand lifted to his hat raced by the sentry: "It is only the joy of a hero in seeing a hero's noble death.—Thanks, comrade!"

## *A Clean White Shirt*

PRIVATE Bengt Geting had got a Cossack's pike through his breast, and his comrades laid him on a heap of twigs in a copse, where Pastor Rabenius gave him the Holy Communion. This was on the icy ground before the walls of Veperik, and a whistling norther tore the dry leafage from the bushes.

"The Lord be with thee!" whispered Rabenius softly and paternally. "Are you prepared now to depart hence after a good day's work?"

Bengt Geting lay with his hands knotted, bleeding to death. The hard eyes stood wide open, and the obstinate and scraggy face was so tanned by sun and frost that the bluish pallor of death shone out only over his lips.

"No," he said.

"That is the first time I have heard a word from your mouth, Bengt Geting."

The dying man knotted his hands all the harder, and chewed with his lips, which opened themselves for the words against his will.

"For once," he said slowly, "even the meanest and raggedest of soldiers may speak out."

He raised himself painfully on his elbow, and ejaculated such a piercing cry of anguish that Rabenius did not know whether it came from torment of soul or of body.

He set down the chalice on the ground, and spread a handkerchief over it, so that the leaves which were tumbling about should not fall into the brandy.

"And this," he stammered, pressing his hands to his forehead, "this I, who am a servant of Christ, shall be constrained to witness, morning after morning, evening after evening."

Soldiers crowded forward from all sides between the bushes to see and hear the fallen man, but their captain came in a wrathful mood with sword drawn.

"Tie a cloth over the fellow's mouth!" he shouted. "He has always been the most obstinate man in the battalion. I am no more inhuman than another, but I must do my duty, and I have a mass of new and untrained folk that have come with Lewenhaupt. These have got scared by his wailing, and refuse to go forward. Why don't you obey? I command here."

Rabenius took a step forward. On his curled white peruke he had a whole garland of yellow leaves.

"Captain," he said, "beside the dying the servant of God alone commands, but in glad humility he delivers his authority to the dying man himself. For three years I have seen Bengt Geting march in the line, but never yet have I seen him speak with any one. Now on the threshold of God's judgment-seat may no one further impose silence upon him."

"With whom should I have spoken?" asked the

bleeding trooper bitterly. "My tongue is as if tied and lame. Weeks would go by without my saying a word. No one has ever asked me about anything. It was only the ear that had to be on guard so that I did not fail to obey. 'Go,' they have said, 'go through marsh and snow.' To that there was nothing to answer."

Rabenius knelt and softly took his hands in his.

"But now you shall speak, Bengt Geting. Speak, speak, now that all are gathered to hear you. You are now the only one of us all who has the right to speak. Is there a wife or perhaps an aged mother at home to whom you want me to send a message?"

"My mother starved me and sent me to the troops, and never since then has a woman had anything else to say to me than the same, 'Get away, Bengt Geting, go, go! What do you want with us?'"

"Have you then anything to repent?"

"I repent that as a child I did not jump into the mill-race, and that, when you stood before the regiment on Sunday and admonished us to go patiently on and on, I did n't step forward and strike you down with my musket. — But do you want to know what causes me dread? Have you never heard the wagon-drivers and outposts tell how in the moonlight they have seen their comrades that were shot limp in crowds after the army and hop about on their mangled legs and cry, 'Greetings to mother!' — They call them the Black Battalion. It's into the

Black Battalion that I'm to go now. But the worst is that I shall be buried in my ragged coat and my bloody shirt. That's the thing I can't get out of my mind. A plain trooper does n't want to be taken home like the dead General Liewen, but I'm thinking of the fallen comrades at Dorfsniki, where the king had a coffin of a couple of boards and a clean white shirt given to each man. Why should they be treated so much better than I? Now in this year of misfortune a man is laid out as he falls. I'm so deeply sunk in misery that the only thing in the world that I can be envious of is their clean white shirts."

"My poor friend," answered Rabenius quietly, "in the Black Battalion — if you believe in it now — you will have great company. Gyldenstolpe and Sperling and Lieutenant-Colonel Mörner already lie shot on the field. And do you recall the thousand others? Do you remember the friendly Lieutenant-Colonel Wattrang, who came riding to our regiment and gave an apple to every soldier, and who now lies among the Royal Dragoons, and all our comrades under the meadow at Holofzin? And do you remember my predecessor, Nicholas Uppendich, a mighty proclaimer of the Word, who fell at Kalisch in his priestly array? Grass has grown and snow fallen over his mould, and no one can point out with his foot the sod where he sleeps."

Rabenius bowed yet deeper, and felt the man's forehead and hands.

"In ten or at most fifteen minutes you will have ceased to live. Perhaps these minutes might replace the past three years, if you sanctify them rightly. You are no longer one of us. Don't you see that your spiritual guide is lying on his knees by you with head uncovered? Speak now and tell me your last wish; no, your last command. Consider but one thing. The regiment is disorganized on your account, and meanwhile the others go forward with glory or stand already on the storming-ladders. You have frightened the younger fellows with your death-wound and your wailing, and you alone can make it good again. Now they listen only to you, and you alone have it in your power to make them go against the enemy. Consider that your last words will be last forgotten, and perhaps sometime will be repeated for those at home, who sit and roast their potatoes behind the oven."

Bengt Geting lay motionless, and a shadow of perplexity passed over his glance. Then he gently raised his arms as if for an invocation and whispered, "Lord, help me to do even so!"

He gave a sign that now he was able only to whisper, and Rabenius laid his face to his so as to be able to hear his words. Then Rabenius motioned to the soldiers, but his voice trembled so that he could hardly make himself heard.

"Now Bengt Geting has spoken," he said. "This is his last wish, that you should take him between

you on your muskets and carry him with you in his old place in the line, where he has stubbornly marched day after day and year after year."

The drums now struck up, the music began, and with his cheek on the shoulder of one of the soldiers Bengt Geting was carried forward step by step over the field toward the foe. Around him followed the whole regiment, and ever with bared head Rabenius went behind him, and did not notice that he was already dead.

"I shall see to it," he whispered, "that you get a clean white shirt. You know that the king does not regard himself as more than the humblest soldier, and it is so that he himself wishes sometime to lie."

ON the first of May Field Marshal Rehnskiöld gave an evening dinner, and Colonel Appelgren became heated about the forehead and inquisitive; he rolled bread-crumbs with his fingers and looked cross-eyed.

"Can Your Excellency say why Poltava has to be besieged?"

"His Majesty wants to have amusement till the Poles and Tartars come with reinforcements."

"And nevertheless we know that neither of them is coming. Europe begins to forget our court *à la* Diogenes with riding ministers of state, fighting chancellor's clerks, chamberlains falling in battle, seats of honor on tree stumps . . . and with palaces of tent-cloth, and pancakes and small beer on the royal table."

"His Majesty wishes to practise fortifications now, and is getting the habit of camping out for the rest of his life. So we have time ahead of us. Poltava is a little flea fortress, which will probably surrender when the first shot cracks."

The field marshal became abruptly silent, and dropped his fork.

"I believe those fellows in the town have gone crazy, and are going to defend themselves."

He sprang out and threw himself into the saddle. All arose and heard a continuous firing.

The Russian sentries around the walls had the custom of shouting long and noisily in the darkness, "Good bread, good drink!" During this screaming, Colonel Gyllenkrook, without any one being able to hear his approach, had begun to open trenches, and had set up a cover, but at that moment the king ran over the field, and shouted aloud something to his adjutant-general. The fact that he held his drawn broadsword prevented him from looking ridiculous as he ran. Gyllenkrook asked him not to cry out so loud so as not to alarm the enemy, but even while he was speaking, the outposts were silent, and began instead to light their port-fires and shoot. Fire-balls that rose aloft threw their light over the hills and meadow-land, and were reflected in the hurrying waters of the Vorskla. Gyllenkrook's laboring Zaporogeans then sprang back from their spades and gabions, and the Swedish soldiers, who thumped on their leather coats with the flat of the sword, at last began themselves to flee or to lie down on the ground.

In that way the shooting had begun.

"Look there!" said Gyllenkrook, who stood behind a tree with the king and the Little Prince. "A small cause may bring about such a big confusion, and for the last time I dare propose that the whole siege be given up. In my prayers unite the tired troops and all the unhappy subjects at home. Why were we not commanded hither in the winter, when

the town might have been easily taken? Now the garrison is strengthened every day, and the enemy's whole army is on the advance. We have barely thirty cannon left, and the powder, which has many times been wet and dried again, only casts the shot a little way from their muzzles."

"Nonsense, nonsense! Why, we've shot away many a log thicker than a scaling-post."

"But here we need to shoot away many hundreds."

"If we can shoot away one, we can shoot away hundreds. We must perform just what is extraordinary, so that we get reputation and honor from it. Now we shall let the Zaporogeans see that they can work here without the least danger."

The king stuck his broadsword under his arm, and went out into the rain of shot on the field. Behind him followed the Little Prince, pale, erect, festal as a youth in an ancient procession to a sacrifice at the temple.

Two thick logs were driven down like two gate-posts close to the open trench, and there the king took his stand behind a fallen fire-ball, whose daylight brilliance exposed him to the enemy. The Little Prince gave him a hesitating side-look, and felt up and down his sword-hilt with his hand, which trembled a little. After that he climbed up on one of the logs and took a position with his arms at his side. Then a junior officer, who was called Mor-

ten Preacher, stepped up on the other log. He had a face brown as leather, black hair, and brass rings in his ears. Motionless as two painted wooden statues in some Catholic country district, the two guards stood in this way behind their king, and the furious Russians directed their catapults and field-pieces and muskets at the remarkable spectacle. No one wished to humble himself and descend first, and for that reason they had to stay. There was whistling and swishing as of whips and rods, as of storm-gusts and pipes, while cannon-balls, striking near, threw gravel and clods on high. It lightened and thundered, the ground trembled like a frightened horse, and splinters and bits of stone whirled by.

"The king is there! Now he 'll be shot!" cried the soldiers, rushing forward and driving the Zaporogeans among them. Again they seized the spades, and again the Zaporogeans tore up the turf and opened the earth, so that they could lie down and get shelter.

In the light of the burning pitch stood the monarch of the generals and dignitaries, the comrade of the soldiers, at once knight errant, king, and philosopher. All day long dark memories had slunk in his footsteps. He recalled Axel Hård, whom he himself had killed by accident, and Klinckowström, the friend of his youth, shot dead. He felt the loss of neither, but he could not forget their bloody

clothes. All the heaven-storming gayety of boyhood, however, awoke to life and silenced the heavy thoughts, when one heard the bullets. He had drained the cup of warlike adventure to the bottom, and the drink needed to be spiced more strongly every day to have relish. He began to see the great clamorous victories in a colder light as they became rarer. To be sure he could still sometimes talk about ruling great states, but that was mostly so that these should provide him daily with a hundred more gallant guardsmen. He never forgot that any moment might be his last, but the years of misfortune were come. How sweet would not repose be after a glorious death! To will, to know he had the power, but yet to fail and become a mockery, because the others could no longer follow — that was the breath of frost from the autumn of life. He wished to prove, he wished to show, that he was still the exceptional man under God's protection. If he were not that, then he wished to fall like the plainest soldier.

Morten Preacher meanwhile grew so excited that he could not hold himself motionless on the pillar, but shifted the musket from his back. Who did not know Morten Preacher, the sharpshooter, who could make even the king clap his hands? Either an infantryman or a cavalryman he could bring down in full career. He muttered and laughed, laid the weapon to his eye, and shot at a shadow that climbed in the farthest cherry-tree. Struck by the

ball, it tumbled down among the blossoming twigs like a bird. Then a hunter's enthusiasm came over Morten Preacher, and he hopped down and sprang to the spot.

There lay an old man, shot dead, and beside him stood a little girl of nine years.

"That 's father," she said without crying, and looked at Morten Preacher. "We were out picking nettles, and on the way home—"

"Well, on the way home—?"

"We heard shooting, and then father climbed up to look around. That is father's cherry-tree."

Morten Preacher shook his head, took off his hat and tore at his hair, and sat down.

"God forgive me—the old man has never done me any harm. Dear child—you cannot understand this. But I have a ducat in my pocket. Take it! You see, my child, I'm a hunter, you understand, a regular old expert hunter. Formerly I had my cottage and my sweetheart, who quarrelled and struck at me because I never moved my spade—you know what a spade is?—but only sat in the woods and listened to the blackcock's song. Hearken now! Then one morning I took my musketoon and my dog and went my way out into the world."

The girl turned over the ducat in the light of the fire, but he drew her to his knee, and stroked her softly on the cheeks.

"When I had gone along so the first day, I shot

the dog. When I had gone another day, I gave the gun to a forester who showed me the way. After that I had nothing."

"Can one buy coppers for it?"

"Surely, surely. So when I joined the army like that and got me a war musket, then, as you may believe, I became a hunter again. But Heaven have pity!—You shall come here every evening in the dusk, and then you shall get half of my day's rations and all I can pick up."

She stared at the musket in the grass, so he rose and went, leaving it there.

"The girl can't know that it was I who fired the shot, and she shall never get to know it.—You are a Judas, who has robbed an innocent man of life.—Thou shalt not kill! Thou shalt not kill!"

He held his forehead and tottered away over the field. Then he came to d'Albedyhll's Dragoons, who lay around a log fire and read prayer-books, and there he sat down to read, until finally he began to pray aloud and preach.

"What news?" the soldiers asked next morning of Brakel's red-haired sutler, a little knowing West Gotlander, who stood in his gray blouse among the pots and hung-up clothes.

"News? Morten Preacher must have had a sunstroke in the middle of the night and become ripe for the fool's locker. He goes bare-headed down to the river and shouts. When the preacher's fever

sets in on him, he always says he has been out and shot somebody."

In gloomy silence the soldiers received tin bowls hardly half full.

"Bread or dead. Why don't we go ahead and storm before it's too late?"

"The king is working with ditches, and Gyllenkrook has to stand by the work night and day. Just listen to Morten Preacher now down by the water! Here has been praying and psalm-singing lately so that it makes one warm at heart to hear the field marshal go on the rampage."

At dusk Morten Preacher slunk away to the cherry-tree, where the little nine-year-old stood already waiting with her smooth flaxen, almost white hair and her serious face.

He had with him his day's rations, and he gave her his last kopek for the promise that he might kiss her on both cheeks.

"Is your mother living?"

She shook her head.

"What's your name?"

"Dunya."

He wanted to kiss her again on the cheeks, but she moved away.

"Give me a kopek first!"

He went back to the camp—and begged kopek pieces of all whom he met.

"I will watch over her when there is a storming.

She is like a little, little princess. I will lay by from my pay, so that one day she will have something to get married on. — Why should she not get married? — Surely, surely! I have, to be sure, my wife at home, and I have a sweetheart in the baggage-train, too. And it seems I'm a murderer. Surely a little princess shall marry!"

He had made a copy of St. John's Gospel and, sitting down, he read aloud from it to d'Albedyhll's Dragoons.

All the plants of spring flamed up over the hilly meads down to the yellowish banks of the Vorskla, but the soldiers looked only toward Poltava, which shone out through clumps of forest with its white cloister walls, its wooden towers, palisades, and ramparts, on which young and old men, women, and children had thrown up a breastwork of sacks filled with earth, of wagons, bundles of twigs, and barrels.

"What 's the news? Will they never lead us against the foe?" the soldiers inquired of the sutler.

"The foe is so kind as to come to us instead," he answered, and dried his forehead with his blouse. "In the night I heard how he rolled his field-pieces. The heavy firing is not from the Swedes, for we have no other cannon-balls left than those which the Zaporogeans pick up out of the ground. It 's the czar's whole army that 's already standing on the other side of the river."

Then came Major-General Lagercrona, spurring

his horse and shouting that the king was wounded in the foot. Beside the royal litter the field marshal pointed out the situation of the seventeen redoubts which the enemy had already begun to throw up at the village of Pietruska.

"What's the news?" muttered the soldiers daily around the sutler.

"If there's nothing else that any one offers, then I'm the richer," answered he, and pointed with his ladle around the verdant landscape. "The king has got mortification in his wound. The brandy is done. The bread is done. I've a little porridge for you today — but then that's done. The enemy has barred us in and disputes our retreat. Oh, the devil, the devil! It's only the Swedes that can stand such bitter days."

He stamped on the turf, put the ladle to his eye, and aimed like an assassin at the king's battered cabin, but the heroic, frost-bitten heads around him lowered their eyes.

"Thou shalt not kill!" whispered Morten Preacher with upraised arms.

So passed the month of May, and the heat of June shone in through the tent-cloths. The soldiers sat in a row and twined wreaths for midsummer-poles, but did not talk. They thought of the pastures at home, of the cottages, of the wide, wide moors.

On Sunday, a little before evensong, Morten

Preacher slipped to the grove, where little Dunya, in return for some kopeks, handed him a basket with the first half-ripened cherries. He ate them along with her, patted her small hands, and played with her, carrying her like a child, but he could not get her to smile. For his last kopek he was allowed to kiss her three times on the cheeks.

When he came back there was clamor and unrest. Officers inspected the soldiers' equipment and thumped on their swords, which here and there were so ground that they were like worn scythes. Brakel's sutler pulled together his empty pans. The king had resolved to deliver battle.

On the grassy banks outside the king's window the generals and colonels were already sitting to receive their divisions and written instructions. There sat the melancholy Lewenhaupt with his great clear eyes and a littleLatin pocket lexicon stuck between the buttons of his coat. There sat the gallant Creutz with hands crossed over the pommel of his sword, and Sparre and Lagercrona carried on a noisy conversation in loud tones. Colonel Gyllenkrona stood by the table, bent over his fortification drawings, with which he appeared to be so fascinated that he did not notice the others in the least, but occupied himself instead with carefully and slowly flicking the grains of sand from his beloved sketches. Leaning back a little by the door, in the worst of tempers, stood the field marshal himself with his pointed,

somewhat turned-up nose and his puckered, purple-red girl's mouth.

. . . . . .

In the dusk began the march with furled banners and without music, and the king's litter was set down for a while in a grove in advance of the life-guards. From the field were heard sounds of the enemy knocking and hammering on their palisades as upon waiting scaffolds. The band of Charles men, once so proud, had now so little shot and powder that they could not bring along to the encounter more than four poor field-pieces, and now when they heard hammer-blows so near, many among the scarred warriors were seized with corporal fear and vainly offered a ducat for a swallow of brandy. It was the wane of the moon. The horses stood saddled, and the men had their muskets or carbines at their side. From one of the infantry regiments was heard murmuring and whispering, as the chaplain distributed the Communion, and he had to grope with his left hand in the darkness to put the chalice to the mouths of the kneeling soldiers. Around the litter, beside which the king had stuck his broadsword into the earth, the generals had lain down for a moment in their cloaks, and Piper sat on a drum with his back against a tree. To break the force of gloomy thoughts and avoid one another, they began a philosophic dis-

course with the king. He sat in a circle of ponderers and taught like a master in his school, and Lewenhaupt, the honest old Latinist colonel, recited Roman verses.

When he ceased, he took a burning torch from the attendants and threw the light on the king, whose head had slid to one side. Piper and all the generals arose and forgot their spite, so beautiful appeared to them the aspect of the sleeper. His hat lay on his knee, and the coverlet was folded about the hurt and bandaged foot. The emaciated and fever-wasted countenance with the frost-bites on nose and cheek had become even smaller than before, and harder and more set. Yellowish and humid, it was already shadowed by a premature old age, but there was a drawing and twitching of the lips. It looked as though he was dreaming.

The king of the Charles men dreamed that he saw an endless line of giggling and tittering folk, who went hurriedly past and held their hands before their faces to hide how they laughed at him. Sometimes they were bright green or blue, and they shone like lighted lanterns. Finally, on a sweating bay, there came a tall man who was completely clad in dusty silk taffeta. "Begone! you bald and lame Swede," he cried, guffawing from the back of his horse. "In this very place, three hundred years ago, the hordes of Tamerlane cut down the united armies of the West. What would you do to me and my ocean of

men with your last thinned-out regiments and your four field-pieces? My men are thieves and drunken miscreants, and are of less use to me than nails in a plank, but I make good use of such nails. I am building at a great ship to sail the centuries, and I myself am still the same to-day as when I stood at my trade, a simple carpenter in Saardam. Millions upon millions shall bless my work."

The king would have answered, but he found that his tongue was paralyzed.

Lewenhaupt knelt with bared head, and touched him on the shoulder. "My most gracious lord, day is dawning, and I call down God's protection over your noble person and actions."

The glow of morning already burned between the tree trunks, and the king opened his eyes. Straightway he grasped his broadsword. As soon as he noted the many men who stood around him and the bearded cavalry chaplain Norberg and all the attendants, his expression changed, and he nodded with his usual chilly friendliness — but the dream still stood out clear in his thoughts. It seemed to him that the others, too, must have seen it.

"What is a kingdom?" he said. "An accident, a far-stretching estate with fortresses at the outlying farms. Battles and negotiations move the boundaries. And yet, czar, supposing you have power over millions but not over yourself? The Lord God may so ordain that men shall one day inquire less con-

cerning states, but all the more concerning individuals. If I conquer you, your whole ship takes fire and becomes ashes, but if you cut down me and my men, you only fulfil thereby the victory of my achievements."

Lewenhaupt gripped Creutz by the arm, and whispered mournfully: "Dear brother, dark forebodings will not slip from my mind. Shall we all ever again stand together under God's free heaven? Hark how the field marshal swears and curses behind the Upplanders. Gyllenkrook won't even go forward to him and ask for orders. You are holding back, too. And look how haughtily Piper is glowering after us!"

"The Swedes always look haughtily at one another. For that reason they will some day be undone, and their name erased among peoples. Our children in the tenth or twentieth generation will see the time. To-day is only the beginning."

"The Lord pardon your words! Never did I see more glorious champions of God than the Swedes, and never a people so wholly free from the self-assurance and rough hands of a despotic will. The king is now too ill to hold us together longer, though he pretends to be as confident as a young cornet. He was given at birth the recklessness which the gods lend their favorites, but now—"

"Now?"

"Now he has got the impenetrable and over-

mastering delusion to which the favorite's recklessness hardens when the gods abandon him."

Lewenhaupt pressed his hat on his head and drew his sword, but turned yet again to Creutz and whispered: "Perhaps men such as I with my care for the rank and file, and Gyllenkrook with his compass-case and all his redoubts adorned with palisades, have never all this time understood him rightly. You with your broadsword have blindly obeyed. May it be granted us all to-day to fulfil his mission with him, for I foresee that he who survives the evening will envy the brothers who by then have entered into eternal blessedness."

The riders now sprang into the saddle. Lewenhaupt went to his foot-regiments, and in the light of daybreak they saw before them the expectant field. It was black. It was already burnt. It was a heap of ashes, which without flower or grass-blade vanished between clumps of trees into the barren steppes. It was so level that a cannon-carriage could easily be driven back and forth.

Out in front of the largest Russian redoubt came a red-clad rider, who fired off his pistol. Then the enemy let all their drums beat behind the outworks, on which appeared innumerable troops of soldiers and standards and catapults and field-pieces. Immediately the Swedish music answered throughout all the regiments.

The indomitable Axel Sparre and Karl Gustaf

Roos rushed in front of the army with their battalions, and stormed the field redoubts. Horses snorted, harness creaked, swords and carbines clattered, and ashes and dust fell over the clumps of trees so that the green was quenched on the leafage.

The king sent Creutz with the left wing after the conquering Sparre, and behind the captured entrenchments the enemy's cavalry rushed in flight toward the swampy meadows by the Vorskla. On the other side Lewenhaupt advanced with his infantry, occupied two redoubts, and disposed himself to attack the enemy's camp from the south with the bayonet. There the confusion was so great that women began to harness horses to the baggage wagons, but the czarina, a tall woman of some twenty years with a high bosom, white forehead, and deeply colored cheeks, still stood out by the wounded among her bandage-strips and water-flasks with an almost haughty tranquillity.

Meanwhile the generals collected around the Swedish king's litter, which was borne along not far from the East Gotland infantry regiment and set down by a bog. Here a halt was commanded, and a crowd with deep bowing and taking off of hats began already to congratulate His Majesty and wish for further progress. While the lackey Hultman was filtering water and catching it in a silver goblet, the king said: "Major-General Roos has

been surrounded, and the field marshal has therefore checked the other troops, but Lagercrona and Sparre have been sent back to help Roos on, and he is likely to come here soon."

Thus the army remained standing there awhile, but soon Sparre came up, sprinkled with drops of blood, and related that he could not get through on account of the enemy's superior numbers. The troops now marched back and forth for a long time without the officers' knowing where they should lead them, and during the wasted time the Russians got fresh courage. Then Lewenhaupt suddenly put himself in motion, marched to the stretch of woods where Creutz' squadrons had taken position, and there drew up the infantry in line against the enemy. No one knew from where the command for this had been given out, and, beside himself with wrath, the field marshal galloped forward to the king's litter, which went beside the Guards.

"Is it Your Majesty who commanded Lewenhaupt with the infantry to draw himself up against the enemy?"

The disrespectful tones took the king aback, and as if by the light of a dark lantern that has been suddenly opened, he saw how wearily and coldly even his closest favorites in the circle were staring at him.

"No," he answered reluctantly, but became blushing red, and all understood that he lied.

Then in the furiously raging field marshal every last glimmer of respect and trust was quenched. He gave voice to the spite and despair which all had nourished for days and months. The king, acclaimed for his love of veracity, had all at once been humiliated to the level of a wounded soldier, had behaved himself churlishly, and tried to exculpate himself with rude prevarications. Rehnskiöld did not reflect. The moment of retribution had come. He lost control of himself. He wanted to take revenge and punish and humiliate. He could not pretend that he believed in the lying. He could not even use the customary form of address.

"Yes, yes," he shouted from his horse, "that's what you always do. Would that you would leave it to me!"

With that he turned his back on him.

The king sat motionless on the litter. He had been shamed before the whole troop, and his diffidence and disinclination for bickering had befooled him into an unpremeditated and pitiful trick. His own men had heard him lie like an interrogated baggage-driver. He could not take back his words without still more exposing his shame. The degradation he had brought upon himself as man was for him harder to endure than if he had lost his crown. He wanted to spring up, throw himself on a horse, and take along with him the deep ranks, *his* men, who still believed that he was the chosen of God.

But the pain in his foot and a great lassitude restrained him. His cheeks still glowed, but it was the heat of fever, and for the first time the broadsword trembled in the hand which he was now barely able to raise.

"Take the litter before the front!" he shouted. "Take the litter before the front!"

"The cavalry have not got forward yet," burst out Gyllenkrook with vehemence. "Is it possible that the battle shall begin so soon?"

"They are marching now," answered the king with vexation, "and the enemy is coming out of his lines with the infantry."

Then Gyllenkrook commended the king to God's protection, and seated himself on his horse beside the Guards, who straightway advanced and gave the first volley.

The battle-token was a straw fastened on the hat, and through the noise of shots and trumpets and oboes and drums and cavalry kettledrums sounded the battle-cry of the troops: "God with us! God with us!" In the throng and farther out on the field old war-comrades and near relatives, who had aforetime sat merrily together at home at wedding and christening, met and shouted to one another a last greeting. Where there was more space, captains and lieutenants and ensigns marched before the battalions, pale as corpses, in time with the music, as if they had filed up to a parade in the citadel square by the old

Three Crowns; but the soldiers clenched hands over their empty cartridge-boxes. Through the midst of the fire from the redoubts the Life Guards went in a stubborn line with muskets on shoulder, but when they came to close quarters with the enemy, they shook their clicking weapons savagely and grasped their bayonets. Dust and dirt soon begrimed them all, so that the green coats of the enemy could no longer be distinguished from the blue, and Swedes lifted musket butt against Swedes. In front of Kruse's dragoons Cornet Queckfelt tumbled from his horse with a bullet in his body and the banner against his breast. Major Ridderborg, who in the morning had seen his gray-haired father fall among the troopers by the king's litter, was dragged unconscious from the hand-to-hand struggle. In front of the Nyland regiment fell Colonel Torstenson, and Lieutenant Gyllenbögel stood with shot-wounds in both cheeks, so that one could see the daylight through them. In a thicket behind the Scanian Gentleman-Dragoons reeled Captain Horn, badly wounded in the right leg, and his faithful servant, Daniel Lidbom, held him around the body and dried his forehead. Cavalryman Per Windropp sat dead on his horse, in his hand the tatters of a company flag that had been torn to pieces, and Lieutenant Pauli, who believed him only wounded, offered him his canteen. In front of the Kalmar regiment dropped Colonel Rank, struck in the heart; Major Lejon-

hjelm lay with his leg shot off; and by the corpse of Lieutenant-Colonel Silversparre Ensign Djurklo fought with broken sword to save the banner, until he sank down dying. Around him lay half the non-commissioned officers and half the men as a hero's watch. The Jönköping regiment, which was nearest the redoubts, carried along their wounded colonel, and after Lieutenant-Colonel Night-and-Day and Major Oxe had fallen in their blood, Captain Mörner took command. Beside him lay prostrate in the ashes on the ground Ensign Tigerskiöld with his face hidden in his hands, propped on his elbows and bleeding from five wounds. Scarcely a fourth of the regiment could still bear arms.

At this moment the field marshal came riding, and cried out to Mörner with untimely warmth: "Where the deuce have the regiment's officers gone off to?"

"They are lying wounded or dead."

"Why the thousand devils aren't you lying there with them?"

"No, my old mother's supplications have called down God's protection over me, and therefore I'm alive and have the honor of commanding this regiment, which has done and will do its duty as true warriors. — Stand, boys, stand!"

Colonel Wrangel lay already dead and unrecognizable, and his recruits sought in vain to prop him up under the arms. Colonel Ulfsparre, who went

before the West Gotlanders, fell with his hands pressed to his heart, and his major, the dauntless Sven Lagerberg, was struck down backwards by a musket-ball. The whole hostile army went over him. He heard the horses and the cannon-carriages. He was trampled and kicked and rolled in ashes and dirt among stiffening corpses and moaning wounded, till a wounded dragoon finally took him on his horse, and mercifully conducted him to the baggage-train.

The beloved old banners, shot into strips, were still fluttering in goodly numbers over the human sea, but they wavered and tottered, they were torn and snapped, and at last they sank and vanished one by one. The Uppland regiment, which drew most of its men from the heart of Sweden, from the ancient home of the Svea at Mälardale, was annihilated. Flags with the cross-surmounted apple in the corner were twisted from the clenched hands of the fallen, and amid Cossack pikes and butts and sabres Colonel Stjernhöök was stretched on the ground, as he stammered: "Now is the time when we may cry: Father, it is finished!" Lieutenant-Colonel von Post and Major Anrep fell almost side by side. Captains Gripenberg and Hjulhammar, and Lieutenant Essen, and the three boyishly slender and beardless Ensigns Flygare, Brinck, and Düben already lay in the throes of death. "Stand, boys, stand!" shouted officers and soldiers, and fell over one an-

other, so that of corpses and rags, of clothing and sod and sand, was built a mound which served the living for a breastwork. Whistling grapeshot and musket-balls, grenades and exploding canister, rained over the fighting and the dead, and the air was so saturated with dirt and smoke that men could see only a horse's length ahead.

Then the troops began to waver. Lewenhaupt drew a pistol from the holster and pointed it at his own men. He threatened and struck. "Stand, boys, in Jesus' holy name! I see the king's litter." "If the king is here, we 'll stand," answered the soldiers. "Stand, boys! halt, stand! God with us!" they shouted to themselves, as if to control their limbs, that trembled and dripped with sweat and blood. But step by step they yielded, and the riders reined in their horses, until, with slashed faces and hands, they finally wheeled about in wild flight, man after man, and trampled one another down. Under the rising clouds of smoke they saw the king, who amid fallen troopers, bearers, and attendants lay on the ground without a hat, supported on his elbow, with the injured foot propped on the crushed litter, over which had been spread the clay-spotted cloak of the slain trooper Oxehufvud. The stiffened face was raven-black with grime, but the eyes kindled, and he stammered: "Swedes! Swedes!"

In the yielding ranks many stood still when they recognized the voice, because it seemed to them that

even if they could save themselves now, they must sometime on their death-bed hear across the pillow that timid and lonely voice. He had not the strength to raise himself, but they lifted him on their crossed pikes like a doomed and helpless invalid. Again and again, though, the bearers were shot down, and yet in that instant, when the bleeding men succumbed, they stretched up their arms to support him so that he should not be hurt in the fall. Then Major Wolffelt lifted him on his horse, and afterwards fell himself under the weapons of the pursuing Cossacks. The foot, which was laid over the horse's neck, bled violently, and the bandage dragged in the dust. A cannon-ball from the entrenchments struck off the horse's leg, but Trooper Gierta lifted the king upon his charger and, himself wounded, mounted on the three-legged and bleeding horse. The cavalrymen who had made a ring about the king could hardly hold back the pursuers.

Meanwhile Gyllenkrook rushed over the field, and exhorted the straggling soldiers to rally, but they answered him: "We are all wounded and our officers dead." He then met the field marshal, and now upon the day of retribution there was no longer any deference.

Gyllenkrook shouted to him offensively, "Does Your Excellency hear that the volleys are still sounding on our left wing! Here are a mass of

squadrons that have sat down. Order them to go somewhere!"

"Here everything is mad! Here to be sure some obey me with their haunches, but few with their hearts," answered the field marshal, and rode further and further to the left. At the same time Gyllenkrook saw Piper with his men of the chancellery ride off to the right. Had the two Excellencies spoken together? He shouted after them that they were betaking themselves straight toward the enemy, but they did not turn about. Then he struck his hand on the pommel of his saddle, and understood that now the wine of patience was drunk, that now there remained only captivity or death.

There lay behind him no longer a field. There grew from the earth a boundless wood, but the trunks were men and the boughs weapons. It broadened out. It filled the whole landscape, and constantly, constantly spread forward over the bleeding and dying. It was the czar's army, that marched on to take possession of its land and dedicate its empire to future times. Ever nearer and nearer was heard an uncanny and dull-sounding religious hymn. Slowly, step by step, as in a funeral procession, between swinging thuribles and high over the heads of thousands upon thousands, was borne the giant standard. On the cloth appeared the czar's ancestral tree, surrounded by saints, and

above, under the Trinity, was his own likeness.

The Swedish fugitives gathered around the king by the baggage, where the Swedish Nobleman-Guards and some other regiments kept watch. Having bound up his foot and tolerably wiped off the grime, he now sat in a blue wagon beside the wounded Colonel Hård.

"Where is Adlerfeldt, the chamberlain?" he asked.

Those who stood around him answered, "He fell by a cannon-shot close to Your Majesty's litter."

At that moment the Dalecarlian regiment came past, shattered and in great disorder.

"Dalecarlians," inquired the king, "where is Siegeroth, your Colonel, and Major Svinhufvud, and where is the merry Drake, who is said to have fought so valiantly at the redoubt that he shall get a regiment?"

"They are shot, all of them."

"Where, then, are the Little Prince, and Piper, and the field marshal?"

Those around him shook their heads and looked at one another. Should they once for all tell him the whole truth? Should they on that day of judgment expose all his loneliness? Should they tell him, too, that Hedwig Sofia, his favorite sister, had lain for half a year in her coffin — unburied? There was none who dared to do that.

"Captured," they answered reluctantly.

"Captured? Captured among the Muscovites? Better go among the Turks, then. Forward!"

He paled, but he spoke calmly and almost triumphantly with the unalterable smile on his lips.

A grizzled soldier among the Dalecarlians whispered to the comrades, "Truly I have never seen him so youthful and happy since the day at Narva, when he went with Stenbock. This is a day of victory to him."

The wagon rolled away, and the king of the Charles men, in front of his disordered, fleeing army of haughty ragamuffins, swearing baggage crones, cripples moaning loudly, and limping horses, marched with flying banners and resounding music as from his greatest victory.

. . . . . .

By two o'clock the last volleys were fired, and then stillness had spread itself over the battle-field, where Mazeppa's last Cossacks and countless Zaporogeans were impaled alive on stakes. Homesteads and mills stood burned, trees shot asunder, and the fallen heroes lay with dust and ashes blown over them, all with eyes wide open, as if they had stared back from another world on the past years and on the living. A few captured priests and soldiers roamed about, seeking for their countrymen and sometimes opening a shallow grave, over which the

words of burial in the speech of their far-off homeland were softly whispered out into the dusk of the June evening. After that the grave was again shut, to be overgrown with sedge grass and rough thistles. For centuries after, they have rustled to the winds of the steppes on the gloomy bogland to which the Russians gave the name of the Swedes' Cemetery.

When one of the priests found Lieutenant-Colonel Wetzel, who had fallen, together with his two sons, he picked up the empty covers of the prayer-book which lay beside him, adorned with the family crest.

"You are the last of your family," he said; "and how many a stock has been extinguished on this field! Galle, Siegeroth, Mannersvärd, Rosenskiöld, von Borgen. As I now tear apart the crest on this cover and strew it to the winds, I also in the name of my afflicted, my annihilated father-folk, shatter the coats-of-arms above you all."

A multitude of bodies were thrown together in a heap outside of the field entrenchment where the day's conflict had been hottest, but the others remained strewn about. The air was filled almost at once with a stale vapor and with countless flapping crows. But darkness descended silently with all the more solemnity over the wide city of graves, though the wounded still cried for water. Those most pitiably mangled prayed that some one in mercy would finish them with a sword-thrust, or they

dragged themselves to a horse that had been shot, pulled the pistols from the holsters, and took themselves from the light of day, after they had on tremulous knees called down a blessing over all at home and recited the Lord's Prayer. Then a mortally wounded dragoon began to speak words of power and to thank God for his glorious death-wounds. Over himself and his comrades he uttered the burial words and thrice took earth with his hands and cast it upon his breast. "Out of earth are we come, to earth we shall return." After that he preached with ecstasy of the Resurrection, and finally with a loud voice took up a funeral hymn, and twenty or thirty voices answered far off in the dark under the star-bright heavens.

Morten Preacher, who stole around on the plain without feeling any terror of the fallen, continued the psalm when the dragoon was silent. Then he caught sight of an old woman, who came with a torch. After her followed a line of peasants with long, rude carts, on which they loaded clothing and all manner of plunder. A fallen cornet, who was not yet dead, defended himself with his hand and would not let go from him a necklace with a little silver cross, but they thrust him down with a hay-fork.

Then Morten Preacher sprang forward. "Thou shalt not kill! Thou shalt not kill!" he whispered. Among the plundering women he recognized his

nine-year-old Dunya, his little princess. His whole countenance changed, and he stretched out both hands to her, half like a father, half like a bashful lover. She stared at him, and burst into a silly laugh.

"That 's the wicked Swede," she cried, "who bribed me so as to get cherries and kiss me on the cheeks."

She sprang upon him like a cat and tore the earrings from him, so that the blood ran down the sides of his neck. He fell backwards, and the women seized him and struck him and tore his clothes from him. They came upon his transcript of St. John's Gospel, and strewed the leaves around like feathers from a plucked fowl. They pulled off his flap-boots and ragged stockings, but when he saw his little Dunya clutch at a hay-fork, he wrenched himself loose with the strength of upflaming hate and fled in his shirt over wounded and dead.

"Not even trust in a guileless heart is left us more," he muttered, and clambered up on a lame horse which had attached itself to him in the darkness. "God has abandoned us. This is the judgment. All is over, and the whole world is dark."

He rode for two nights and two days, and wounded stragglers pointed out the road. He found the fleeing Swedes on a peninsula between the Vorskla and the bright Dnieper, which spread itself out like a lake between banks overgrown with

reeds, underbrush, and bushes. The Russians were close behind them on the landward side, but when the outposts saw Morten Preacher in his bloody shirt, riding bare-back on the lame horse, they sprang to one side in terror and only shot after him when he was already past.

The sun burned hot as fire. The wounded and those with camp-fever were bedded under bushes by the water. The generals stood in conversation, and Lewenhaupt turned mournfully to Creutz.

"If the king is taken, the men of Sweden will abandon their houses and leave their last wisp of hay for his ransom. The responsibility is ours. This war is a game of chess, where everything is decided by taking the kings. On my knees I have prayed him to have himself rowed across the river, but he pushed me away, and said he had serious matters to consider."

"My dear brother, you talk to him as to a gouty statesman. You should never talk to him as to a man, but as to a youth who is proud of being challenged to show his manhood."

Creutz went forward to the king's wagon and swung the gloves in his hand with such violence that it seemed as if he meant to strike Charles on the forehead, but he was at once confounded by his radiant glance.

"Your Majesty is in perplexity?"

"I fight ill with the pen—that's what I 'm think-

ing of. I wish to draw up my will and arrange for the succession. Then we 'll set the guns cracking! If I 'm left on the field, I wish to be buried in my shirt like a common soldier on the place where I fall."

Creutz twisted and squeezed the gloves; he was cowed and lowered his head, like the others.

"Most gracious lord, I am not of those who pray God to spare their life, because full well do I understand the highest longing of a hero. If Your Majesty should get your bullet . . . well, so be it, in Jesus' name! But to-day Your Majesty can no longer stay in the saddle. God forgive my words, but Your Majesty has got to the point of being carried around helpless, and when the last of us has lost his life, there will be left only Your Majesty — a prisoner!"

"A man should not only stand one against five, he should also be able to stand one against all."

"True, true. But — devil take me! — we common fellows in uniform are not fit for that. One against all? That means one against the whole world. For that are needed men of quite a different sort, for we are such pitiful wretches that we have nothing to defend ourselves with but our blades. Now that I have described the situation plainly, I therefore beseech Your Majesty to stay with us and not cross the river, because then Your Majesty would set yourself one against all. Then it would be: What an Alexander to run away and leave his troops to the Russians! What a heartless,

disgraceful dolt! Look, look! And he took the plate and money-barrels from Saxony along instead of leaving everything to the Russians. Oho, yes, hahaha! — We poor honest subjects can never allow that Your Majesty should set yourself as one against the whole world in that way, to expose your high person to the mud-flinging that ignorance and stupidity will not spare either to the field marshal or Piper or Lewenhaupt or the rest of us. When did stupidity ever learn to understand misfortune? Your Majesty wants to die, and therefore it is no sacrifice and no achievement to die — that we old wardogs know; but pride, pride, Your Majesty, to offer up that for your subjects is a sacrifice that the subjects cannot consent to. That the men cannot be taken over is clear. We have no barges, no anchors, no spikes, not enough logs, no carpenters. Therefore I require that Your Majesty remain and do not defy the world."

"Get the boats ready!" ordered the king.

Mazeppa, the gallant landed proprietor, had collected his trunks and his two barrels of ducats, and was already sitting on his wagon far out in the water. Zaporogeans and swarms of soldiers tied their clothes on their backs, took wagon-lids and branches of trees under their arms, and sprang into the waves. At midnight the king's wagon also was lifted on two boats tied together, and Gyllenkrook, who stood at his feet, dumbly surrendered to Lew-

enhaupt the battle-plan, pasted on a board. No one spoke. The night was starry and quiet, and the oar-strokes of the troopers died away on the shining river.

"We two shall never see him again," muttered Creutz to Lewenhaupt. "His eyes were so wonderful just now! There is still oil in the lamp, but I am gazing curiously at his future. How will he be when he is conquered, ridiculed, old?"

Lewenhaupt answered, "The wreath he twined for himself slid off upon his subjects instead. It will lie forever on the forgotten graves up there in the marshes.—So we must thank him for all he has made of us."

Far off through the darkness of the night was heard the lamenting voice of Morten Preacher: "'And men have made of me a by-word before the world,' saith Job. 'And I am become a mockery, and mine eyes are wasted with grief, and my limbs are all a shadow. Unto corruption I say: thou art my father, and unto worms: ye are my mother and sister. And where then is my hope? It goeth down to the gate of death, when I and it shall rest in the earth.'"

Day came on, and Morten Preacher in his bloody shirt rode from group to group, examining the men in the Catechism and Biblical knowledge. The soldiers stood in silence by the empty tent of the king, but when the shout was raised that they must sur-

render, and when the Russian general Bauer, tanned by the sun, ascended the hill to receive the trophies, Morten Preacher stepped down and wrung his hands.

Round about, with their brazen helmets and pikes, sat the Cossacks on their tired and panting horses, and before them on the ground were laid kettledrums and bass-drums and horns and muskets whose thunder had rolled over battalions, and the well-known flags to which once mothers and wives had waved farewell from door and stairway and window. There was gleaming and sparkling on the heather. Sullen old under-officers embraced each other sobbing. Some cut off their bandages and let the blood run, and two battle-brothers quenched each other's lives with their swords at the same time that they threw them down before the conquerors. Dumb and threatening, the cripples advanced. There came youths with frost-bitten cheeks, and without nose and ears, so that they were like dead men. Ensign Piper, not yet full-grown, who had lost his heels, stumbled up on crutches. There came the courtier Gunterfelt, who lacked both hands, and had got in France two others of wood, black and shining, which fingered up and down on his coat. There rattled wooden legs and canes and litters and ambulance-wagons.

Morten Preacher stood with hands clasped. Sparks leaped before his eyes. There was a roaring

and moaning within, and the old preaching-spirit came so violently over him that he himself heard how his voice at one time was choked and hoarse, but the next grew so strong that it seemed to him as if he were borne away on the wings of it and were changed to a flame of fire.

He reeled forward to the arms that had been laid down and pointed to the empty tent of the king.

"*He* alone is the offender. You, mother or widow, clad in mourning, turn his picture to the wall! Forbid the little ones to mention his name! You, little Dunya, who with your playmates will soon be picking flowers on the graves, build his monument with skulls and horses' heads! You, cripple, knock with your crutch on the hollow earth and summon him to a meeting there below, where thousands whom he sacrificed await him!—And yet I know that one day before the judgment seat of righteousness we shall all limp forward on our wooden legs and crutches, and say: 'Forgive him, Father, as we have forgiven him, because our love was both his victory and his destruction.'"

When no one replied, but all stood bent forward and dumb as if they had answered the same, his despair was yet more vehement. He covered his angular face with his hands.

"Tell me by the grace of God that he lives!" cried he. "Say that he lives!"

With his black wooden fingers Gunterfelt raised

his hat from his head and answered, "His Majesty is saved."

Then Morten Preacher bowed his knee, and trembled, and recovered himself.

"Praised be the Lord of Hosts!" he stammered. "If the king is saved, then I will bear whatever burden fate shall lay upon me."

"Yes, yes, praised be the Lord of Hosts!" repeated the Swedes mumbling, and all slowly lifted their hats from their heads.

## *Behold My Children!*

CORPORAL ANDERS GROBERG stood with his canteen on Saracen's Heath. Around him reeled and marched the last band of fleeing Swedes and Zaporogeans, and on wagons lay those who had been wounded at Poltava. The whole night and morning Anders Groberg had endured thirst so as to spare the last drops of water to the utmost, and the torture had now become overpowering. But in the very moment he lifted the canteen to his lips, he lowered it again.

"My God, my God!" he stammered, "why should I alone drink, when all the others are thirsting? If Thou hast led us forth into the wilderness and the steppes, it is that Thou shouldst sometime be able to say: 'From your poverty-stricken country of snow I let you go forth into the world with musket on shoulder to be hailed as heroes and conquerors, but when I read your hearts and saw that they remained pure, that ye were my children, then I tore your clothes in pieces and set crutches in your hands and wooden legs under your bodies, so that ye should no more hanker after domination over men, but should be gathered among my saints. Such greatness did I grant unto you.'"

Anders Groberg stood awhile longer with the canteen before him. Then he went on, and handed it to the king, who lay in burning fever among the

sacks of hay on his wagon. The king's lips adhered to his teeth; they split and bled when he opened them.

"No, no," he whispered, "give the water to the wounded! I have just had a glass."

Anders Groberg knew well that the king had had no water. He himself was the only man who had taken thought for the morrow and saved it up, and neither spring nor bog had they found for many a mile. But now, as he turned away from the wagon, weakness and temptation once more came over him. He hung the canteen back at his side and continued to march and march without handing it to the wounded. He squeezed the stopper and strove in his soul, but every time he raised the canteen to his mouth, he let it fall again and had not the heart to drink of the water.

"Perhaps," he thought, "I might refresh myself with a clearer conscience, if as an offset I should humiliate myself in something else."

At noon, when the sun burned most hotly, he saw a gray-haired subaltern who went almost naked with unbandaged wounds on his shoulder. Thereupon he tore up his shirt, bound the other's wounds, and gave him his coat; but as soon as he shut his hand on his canteen again, his unrest of conscience woke anew. Then he gave his boots to a sick driver lad, who limped along with bare and bleeding feet, but when he still could not swallow the water with an easy mind in the midst of all the other thirsty

men, he became embittered and hard. He pointed with derisive curses at the money-barrels which, full of gold and silver, clattered as they were taken along on two of the wagons, but which could not provide the unfortunate soldiers with a spoonful of brackish bog-water.

"Whip the horses!" he shouted, "whip the horses, so that the money-barrels shall not be left behind! Whip the men, too!"

The soldiers answered nothing, because now they recognized him again as he used to be formerly, when in the years of success he had gone in front of the line, bitter and abusive. They did not notice that he had hardly heard his own voice before he bent his head and began again to cudgel his brains and whisper to himself.

"Must I then of necessity offer up just the one thing that has now any worth for me?" he thought. "Haha! May we also some day roll the money-barrels on the grass and nevermore touch them with our fingers! My God, my God! Once at Veperik I heard the dying soldier Bengt Geting speak with envy of the fallen who had received a clean white shirt. My longing dares not rise so high. I desire so little . . . ah, only this, not to be left lying behind the others on the heath, only to be laid in the ground, to have earth and grass over me—and a couple of words on the muster-roll. Now it will stand: Anders Groberg, his fate unknown."

Towards dusk a halt was made to bury those who had died during the day, and a couple of Zaporogeans had already stuck their spades in the ground. In the reedy grass grew a few low bushes with cherries which, meanwhile, officers and soldiers picked and divided among them as a bounty bestowed from God's own hands. Anders Groberg slunk behind the bushes to drink the water unseen by the others. But just then the trumpets began to blow as a sign that the pursuing Russians had again become visible against the heaven on the farthest waves of the parched desert of grass.

Anders Groberg opened the tin stopper, but the longer he inhaled the moist smell, the harder beat his heart, and in the nearest wagon the dying Börje Köve, a soldier in charge of the silver, raised himself and stared at him.

Anders Groberg tried to meet his look, but could not, and yet again he pushed the draught of refreshment from him.

"Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness," he said.

Like an acolyte who gives the sacrament, he bore the canteen in front of him and held it to the mouth of the soldier, and the dying man drank the water to the last drop.

Anders Groberg held on tight to the tail-board, but when the wheel rolled on again, his hand slipped off, and he tottered to his knees on the grass.

"There is no place for me on the wagons," he said, and pulled a spade to him. "Though I'm hardly thirty years old, I am as weary and infirm as a man of ninety. But leave me one of the spades, so that, if my strength stays by me, I may at least be able to open the earth and lay me down in my last abode. All my unrest has now fallen sweetly to sleep, and a voice calls at my ear: 'Behold my children!'"

Once more the soldiers around the shaking wagons began their wandering, and the trumpeters turned in the saddle. Flocks of storks with outspread wings hovered in the dusk over the darkening tracts, and out on the steppe Anders Groberg still knelt with the spade in his hands.

Since then no one has learned anything of his fate.

IN the ante-room of the Council Chamber already stood the secretary, Schmedeman, with the address to the chiefs of the provinces, which was now to be signed, and in which new levies were required from impoverished Sweden.

The lords began to assemble, and old Frölich, who with crossed hands was groaning and snoring in a corner beside the sick Falkenberg, suddenly awoke.

"We must hand over to the king the whole bank with the money and the patents," he said without lifting his reddened eyelids.

Then Arvid Horn started forward with such vehemence that his chair fell back on the floor, and shouted with his arms lifted toward the ceiling: "Keep yourself to your heavenly revelations and seasons of prayer with sister Eva-Greta and do not make thieves of us out of mere good intentions toward His Royal Majesty!"

"Satan, Satan!" retorted Falkenberg, and rapped with his colorless fingers on the arm of the chair. "Here is blackguarding and maligning from day to day. No Swede any longer respects the honor of another, but no one has the courage for an honest word against him who alone is responsible for it all. Yes, don't you sit down again, you Horn, for people are most of all incensed about your yacht

in the Mälar, and assert that with the powder smoke from your salutes you want to win the same gallant favor with Princess Ulrika Eleonora which Creutz had with Princess Hedwig Sofia of most blessed memory. — Yes, yes, yes, don't talk any more about the person of the king. Read his letter instead! Do that! Is there a single line of it that is worthy of the leader of an unfortunate people?"

"Bah! Don't talk about the letter either!" answered Horn, picking up his chair and sitting down. "A little prattle for women, evasions, and indifferent matters! Don't ask that a person who never exposes himself in a conversation shall set himself down in a tent and pour out his soul on a sheet of paper! But I may well admit that sometime an after-reckoning will follow on all this misery."

"Sometime, say you!" continued the invalid Falkenberg, and raised himself on his trembling arms. "Sometime! Have the Swedes then become cringers and hypocrites? Neither Christian the Tyrant nor Erik XIV has done us so much harm as this man, and therefore he belongs to the devil. Since our men have fallen in the field, only old-woman souls are left alive, and those are they that now begin to propagate the Swedish people."

The venerable Fabian Wrede stood up among the speakers, and his voice was wondrously faint and quiet.

"The session is beginning," he said, and pointed

to the open doors. "I 'm no cringer. I was never of those who jostled around the young master to make him of age, and I am in disfavor. My native land, that is everything to me — father and mother, home, memory, all, all! I know that now my native land is bleeding to death. I know, too, that sometime retribution will follow. But the present is not the time to waste thought upon that. When God sets on us the crown of thorns, that man is not greatest who most conveniently puts it off, but he who himself presses it on all the tighter and says: 'Father, here stand I to serve Thee.' — And I say to you that never, never amid the victory-banners in former years has our little people come nearer to imperishable greatness than to-day."

Horn went into the assembly hall, but on the way he turned to Falkenberg with lowered voice: "My mother had many sons besides me. They have got their bullets. Shall I be worse than they? You talk about the king. If a single man can lure a whole people to so many sacrifices, must not that man be superior to other men?"

Wrede took Falkenberg gently by the shoulders, and added in an undertone: "And the people who have borne so much — would you to-day forbid that people to press fast the crown of martyrdom?"

The lords entered the hall, but, propped on his stick, Falkenberg continued to wander back and forth in the ante-room. When he at length sat down

at the Council table, the secretary had already read out the long address, and the signatures were desired.

No one asked leave to speak. Falkenberg sat huddled together in his armchair. His eyes were moist and dim. Forgetful of precedent, he fumbled with his hands on all sides and whispered, "A pen, a pen!"

## *In the Church Square*

BROAD-SHOULDERED JÖNS SNARE of Mora was eating porridge with his peasant neighbors, Mons and Mathias. He was so stingy that he lay and slept all winter in a shutter-bed to save lighting. His large, flat, beardless face, which glowed in the light from the round window, was uglier and more wrinkled than a troll's, and he talked slowly with a hollow and rumbling voice.

"I predict," said he, striking his hand on the table, "that days of bark-bread are coming. Tomorrow I kill my last cow. Every year brings new levies and conscriptions, and now they want to take from us the church bell, the money for the Communion wine, and the grain in the church storehouse."

"It's truly spoken, that," said Mons.

He scratched his gray cheeks and took another pinch of salt on his porridge-spoon, because it was the Sabbath. At other times Mons was so stingy that he went around among the neighbors and counted the pinches of salt on the porridge and the sticks of wood under the pot.

Mathias, on the contrary, leaned forward over the table, shrivelled and ugly, with black teeth and two small shining gray vipers for eyes. He was, however, the stingiest of the three. A more covetous peasant never lived in the parish. He was

so stingy that he went into the sacristy to the priest and ordered him on week days to wear wooden shoes like the common folk.

"My opinion simply is," he droned, "that God set us peasants to keep our thumbs on the nation's purse. Not a copper will I lay in the bailiff's fist."

"But steal my fish-net," answered Jöns Snare, "that you could."

"It 's truly spoken, that," said Mons.

Mathias sneered, and broke a loaf with the back of an axe: "What 's a man to do when he 's starving?"

Jöns Snare shook his long and straggling yellow hair and got up, and his speech could be heard far outside the cabin.

"Ay, sluggard, then do you take your father's old blunderbuss from the wall, pick off the bailiff and the tax assessor, and hide them in the hayloft. And before you are done for or come to the gallows, you shall go with me to Stockholm to teach the great gentlemen peasant wit. Peace we demand, and peace it shall be!"

"It 's truly spoken, that. We 'll go with you," said Mons and got up, swaying in the knees.

Even Mathias got up and gave Jöns Snare a hand-shake.

"To begin with, let 's go on to the church and talk to the common folk," he said, with his whin-

ing voice. "We must hold by our ancient rights and liberties!"

"I 'll talk, sure enough I will," answered Jöns Snare; "and peace it shall be. We demand it."

They went out of the cabin, and on the way talked with wives and servant-maids and old men and boys. When they came to the church square, they had a good twenty or thirty following with them.

The autumn sun shone cold and clear over woody ridges and lakes and on the long white church. On the square in front of the stable-building the people murmured between wagons and carts, but the children of the confirmation class, who had sat by the altar, had as yet got no further than the threshold of the church porch. The shaggiest old men, who came down from the woods and who had already put on their fur coats, began to cry out and make a racket when they recognized Jöns Snare, because they all regarded him as the most stiff-necked and powerful peasant in the parish. The other Dalecarlians, as well, with bright, open features and white shirts that gleamed out between leather breeches and vests, turned toward him, for it seemed to them that nothing in the world had more weight than his slow and obstinate words.

"You are great church-goers, you," he shouted to them. "I suppose it's to learn the new church prayer about the subject's duty of patience."

No one gave himself leisure to answer. All thronged about him.

"The king is taken!" they shouted. "The king is taken! The king is taken!"

"Is the king taken?" Jöns Snare stood with his hands clenched and looked inquiringly from one to another.

"It 's truly spoken, that," said Mons.

"Be still, you fellow! What do you know about it?" roared Jöns Snare, and lifted his clenched hands half up so that all edged away and left him space.

He sat down on a bench before the stables, but the Dalecarlians would not leave him, and the circle around him became closer. No one wanted to lose a single word.

"Is the king taken?" he asked afresh.

"So it 's being told from one to another. A smith from Falun has said that the king is taken among the heathens."

Mathias moved up nearer and bent himself and stretched out his long fingers.

"What do you think about these tidings, Jöns Snare, I simply ask?"

Jöns Snare sat with hands on knees, and the sun shone upon his wooden, motionless forehead and hard lips. He looked down at the ground.

"What do you say?" murmured the Dalecarlians. "In Stockholm one of the councillors is giving his own money to the Crown, another his plate, and

the third proposes that every well-to-do subject shall give all he has and hereafter possess no more than the poor man. There is only the Queen Dowager who wants her allowance undiminished, the stingy trollop, and people on the street are breaking the windows of Piper's countess."

"And we," said Mathias, "we ought to take the blunderbuss from the wall, Jöns Snare says."

"It's truly spoken, that," confirmed Mons.

Jöns Snare was still silent, and it now became so still around him that nothing else was heard than the ringing of the bell.

"Yes," he answered after a time, and his voice rumbled more deeply and bitterly than ever before, "we ought to take the blunderbuss from the wall and leave the house. By God! you good men of the Dale, if the king is taken, then we demand that they should lead us against the foe, so that we may get him home."

Mathias remained in thought, but his brow became bright, and his gray eyes twinkled slyly.

"Look you, that is a demand that belongs to our ancient rights and liberties."

"It's truly spoken, that," said Mons.

"Yes, yes, that's a demand that belongs to our ancient rights and liberties," murmured the Dalecarlians, and lifted their hands in affirmation. Then there was such a clamor and uproar that the bells could no more be heard.

## *Captured*

FAR out in the wastes of Småland and Finnved wondrous portents appeared in the air, and since work lost all worth and the morrow all hope, people either went hungry or ate and drank with riot and revel amid half-stifled curses. At every farm sat a mother or a widow in mourning. During the day's occupation she talked of the fallen or the captives, and at night she started from her sleep, and thought she was still hearing the thunder of the hideous wagons on which teamsters in black oil-cloth cloaks carried away those who had died of the plague.

In the church of Riddarholm the body of the Princess Hedwig Sofia had lain unburied for seven years from lack of money, and now a new coffin had been laid out for the old Queen Dowager Hedwig Eleonora, the mother of the Charleses. Several sleepy ladies-in-waiting were keeping the death-watch, and wax-lights burned mistily around the dead, who lay wrapped in a simple covering of linen.

The youngest lady-in-waiting arose, yawning, went to the window, and drew back the black broad-cloth to see if dawn had not appeared.

Limping steps were heard from the ante-room, and a little man of a gnarled and rugged figure, who in every way tried to subdue the thump of his wooden leg, advanced to the coffin and with signs of deep

reverence lifted aside the drapery. His fair, almost white hair lay close along his head and extended down his neck as far as his collar. From a flask he poured embalming liquid into a funnel, which was set in the royal corpse between the kirtle and the bodice. But the liquid was absorbed very slowly, and, waiting, he set down the flask on the funeral carpet and went to the lady at the window.

"Is it not seven o'clock yet, Blomberg!" she whispered.

"It has just struck six. It's an awful weather outside, and I feel in the stump of my leg that we're going to have a snowstorm. But then it's a long while since one could foretell anything good in Sweden. Trust me, not this time either will there be enough money for a decent funeral. It was only the beginning when the sainted Ekerot prophesied misery and conflagration. And perhaps the fire didn't go on over the island in front of the castle! Over the plain of Uppsala it threw its light from cathedral and citadel. In Vasterås and Linköping the tempest sweeps the ashes around the blackened spaces devastated by fire—and now there's burning in all quarters of the kingdom. Forgive my freedom, gracious mistress, but to tell the truth is in the long run less dangerous than to lie. That's my old maxim that saved my life once down there by the Dnieper River."

"Saved your life? You were then a surgeon in

your regiment. You must sit down by me here and tell the story. The time is so long."

Blomberg spoke resignedly and a trifle like a priest, from time to time lifting his dexter and middle fingers with the other fingers closed.

Both cast a glance at the corpse, which slept in its coffin with gracefully disposed locks, and wax and rouge in the deepest of the wrinkles. Thereupon they sat themselves on a bench in the window-nook outside the hanging broadcloth, and Blomberg began whispering his narrative.

I was lying unconscious in the marshy wilderness at Poltava. I had stumbled along on my wooden leg and got a blow from a horse's hoof, and when I came to, it was night. I felt a cold, strange hand fumble under my coat and pull at the buttons. An abomination before the Lord are the devices of the wicked, I thought; but gentle words are pure. Without becoming frightened, I seized the corpse-plunderer very silently by the breast, and by his stammered words of terror I perceived that he was one of the Zaporogeans who had made an alliance with the Swedes and followed the army. As surgeon I had tended many of these men, as well as captured Poles and Muscovites, and could make myself tolerably understood in their various languages.

"Many devices are in the heart of man," said I

meekly; "but the counsel of the Lord, that shall abide. No evil can befall the righteous, but the ungodly shall be filled with misfortunes."

"Forgive me, pious sir," whispered the Zaporogean. "The Swedish czar has left us poor Zaporogeans to our fate, and the Muscovite czar, whom we faithlessly deserted, is coming to maim and slay us. I only wanted to get me a Swedish coat so that in a moment of need I could give myself out as one of you. Do not be angry, godly sir!"

To see if he had any knife, I searched out flint and steel while he was speaking and made a fire with dry thistles and twigs which lay at my feet. I noted then that I had before me a little frightened old man with a sly face and two empty hands. He raised himself as vehemently as a hungry animal that has found its prey, and bent in the light over a Swedish ensign who lay dead in the grass. Thinking that a dead man might willingly grant a helpless ally his coat, I did nothing to hinder the Zaporogean; but as he drew the coat from the fallen one, a letter slipped from the pocket. I saw by the address that Falkenberg was the name of the boy who had bled to death. He lay now as fairly and peacefully stretched out as if he had slept in the meadow by the house where he was born. The letter was from his sister, and I had only time to spell out the words which from that hour became my favorite maxim: "To tell the truth is in the

long run less dangerous than to lie." At that moment the Zaporogean put out my light.

"With your wise consent, sir," he whispered; "do not draw the corpse-plunderers hither."

I paid little attention to his talk, but repeated time after time: "To tell the truth is in the long run less dangerous than to lie. That is a big saying, my old fellow, and you shall see that I get along further with it than you do with your disguise."

"We may try it," answered the Zaporogean, "but we must promise this, that the one of us who survives the other shall offer a prayer for the other's soul."

"That is agreed," I said, and gave him my hand, for it seemed as if through misfortune I had found in this shaggy-bearded barbarian a friend and a brother.

He helped me up, and at daybreak we fell into the long line of stragglers and wounded that silently tottered into Poltava to give themselves up as prisoners. They willingly tried to conceal the Zaporogean among the rest. His big boots with their flaps reached up to his hips, and his coat tails hung down to his spurs. As soon as a Cossack looked at him, he turned to one of us and cried with raised voice the only Swedish words he had learned in the campaign: "I Shwede. Devil-damn!"

My Zaporogean and I, with eight of my comrades, were assigned quarters in the upper story of

a big stone house. As we two had come up there first, we picked out for ourselves a little separate cubby-hole with a window on an alley. There was nothing else than a little straw to lie on, but I had in my coat a tin flute, which I had taken from a fallen Kalmuck at Starodub, and on which I had taught myself to play a few pretty hymns. With that I shortened the time, and soon we noticed that, as often as I played, a young woman came to the window on the other side of the alley. Possibly for that reason I played more than I should have otherwise cared to, and I know not rightly whether she was fairer and more seemly than all other women, or whether long sojourn among men had made my eye less accustomed, but I had great joy in beholding her. However, I never looked at her when she turned her face toward our window, because I have always been bashful before women-folk, and have never rightly understood how to conduct myself in that which pertains to them. Nor have I ever sought fellowship with men who go with their heads full of wenches and do nothing but hanker after gallant intrigues. "Let every one keep his vessel in holiness," Paul saith, "and not in the lust of desire as do the heathen, which know not God; also let no one in this matter dishonor and wrong his brother, because the Lord is a powerful avenger in all such things."

I recognized, however, that a man should at all

times bear himself courteously and fittingly, and as one sleeve of my coat was in tatters, I always turned that side inward when I played.

She usually sat with arms crossed above the window-sill, and her hands were round and white, though large. She had a scarlet-colored bodice with silver buttons and many chains. An old witch who often stood beneath her window with a wheelbarrow and sold bread covered with jam called her Feodosova.

When it grew dusk, she lighted a lamp, and since neither she nor we had any shutters, we could follow her with our glance when she blew on the fire, but I found it more proper that we should turn away, and I therefore set myself with my Zaporogean on the straw in the corner.

Besides the prayer-book, I had a few torn-out leaves of Müller's Sermons, and I read and translated many passages for my Zaporogean. But when I noticed that he did not listen, I gave it over for more worldly objects, and asked him of our neighbor on the other side of the alley. He said that she was not unmarried, because maidens in that country always wore a long plait tied with ribbons and a little red tuft of silk. More likely she was a widow, because her hair hung loose as a token of sorrow.

When it became wholly dark, and we lay down on the straw, I discovered that the Zaporogean had stolen my silver snuff-spoon, but after I had

taken it back and reproached him for his fault, we slept beside each other as friends.

I was almost ashamed, when it was morning again, at feeling myself happier than for a long time, but as soon as I had held prayers with the Zaporogean and had washed and arranged myself sufficiently, I went to the window and played one of my most beautiful hymns.

Feodosova was already sitting in the sunlight. To show her how different the Swedes were from her fellow countrymen, I instructed my Zaporogean to clean our room, and after a couple of hours the whitewashed walls were shining white and free from cobwebs. All this helped me to drive away my thoughts, but as soon as I set myself again to rest, my torments of conscience awakened that I could be happy in such misery. In the hall outside, my comrades sat on floor and benches, sighing heavily and whispering about their dear ones at home. In due turn, two of us every day were allowed to go out into the open air to the ramparts, but when I laid myself on my straw in the evening, I was ashamed to pray God that the lot next morning should fall upon me. I knew very well within myself that, if I longed for an hour's freedom, it was only to invent an errand to the house opposite. And yet I felt that, if the lot really fell upon me without my prayer, I should still never venture to go up there.

When I came to the window in the morning, Feodosova lay sleeping in her clothes on the floor with a cushion under her neck. It was still early and cool, and I did not have the heart to set the tin flute to my mouth. But as I stood there and waited, she may have apprehended in her sleep that I was gazing at her, for she looked up and laughed and stretched her arms out, and all that so suddenly that I did not manage to draw back unnoticed. My brow became hot, I laid aside my flute, and behaved myself in every way so clumsily and unskilfully that I never was so displeased with myself. I pulled and straightened my belt, took my flute again from the window, inspected it, and pretended I was blowing dust out of it. When finally the Russian subaltern who had charge over us unfortunates informed my Zaporogean that he was one of the two who were to go out into the city that day, I drew the Zaporogean aside into a corner and enjoined him with many words to pick a bunch of yellow stellaria such as I had seen around the burned houses by the ramparts. At a suitable opportunity we should then give them to Feodosova, I said. She appeared to be a good and worthy woman, who perchance in return might give us poor fellows some fruit or nuts, I said. The miserable bite of bread that the czar allowed us daily did not even quiet our worst hunger, I said.

He was afraid to show himself out in the sunlight, but neither did he dare to arouse mistrust by staying in, and therefore he obeyed and went.

Scarcely was he out of the door, though, when I began to regret that I had not held him back, because now in solitude my embarrassment grew much greater. I sat down on the bed in the corner, where I was invisible, and stayed there obstinately.

Still the time was not long, for thoughts were many. After a while I heard the Zaporogean's voice. Without reflecting, I went to the window and saw him standing by Feodosova with a great, splendid bouquet of stellaria, which reminded one of irises. First she did n't want to take them, but answered that they were impure, since they had been given by a heathen. He pretended that he understood nothing and that he knew only a few words of her speech, but with winkings and gestures and nods he made it intelligible that I had sent the flowers, and then at last she took them.

Beside myself with bashfulness, I went back into the corner, and when the Zaporogean returned, I seized him behind the shoulders, shook him, and stood him against the wall.

But scarcely had I let go my grasp when he with his thoughtless vivacity stood at the window again, made signs with his hands, and threw kisses on all five of his fingers. Then I came forward, pushed him aside, and bowed. Feodosova sat pick-

ing the flowers apart, pulling off the leaves and letting them fall one by one to the ground. Vehemence helped me so that I took courage and began to speak without stopping to consider how it would be most polite to begin a conversation.

"The lady will not take amiss my comrade's pranks and unseemly gestures," I stammered.

She plucked still more eagerly at the flowers and answered after a time, "My husband, when he was alive, often used to say that from heel to head such well-made soldiers as the Swedes were not to be found. He had seen Swedish prisoners undressed and whipped by women, and had seen that the women at the last were so moved because of their beauty that they stuck the rods under their arms and sobbed, themselves, instead of those they tormented. Therefore have I become very curious these days. . . . And the love songs which you play sound so wonderful."

Her speech pleased me not altogether, and I found it little seemly to answer in the same spirit by praising her figure and white arms. Instead I took my flute and played my favorite hymn: "E'en from the bottom of my heart I call Thee in my need."

After that we conversed of many things, and though my store of words was small, we soon understood each other so well that never did any day seem to me shorter.

At mid-day, after she had clattered about with jugs and plates and swung a palm-leaf fan over the embers in the fireplace, she lifted down from the ceiling a landing-net with which formerly her husband had caught small fish in the river. In the net she put a pan with steaming cabbage and a wooden flask with kvass, and the handle was so long that she could hand us the meal across the street. When I drank to her, she nodded and smiled and said that she did not regard it as wrong to feel pity for captured heathens. Toward evening she moved her spinning-wheel to the window, and we kept on conversing when it was dusk. I no longer felt it as a sin to be happy in the midst of the sorrow that surrounded us, because my intent was innocent and pure. Just as I had seen the stellaria shining over heaps of ashes among the burned and desolate houses by the ramparts as a song of praise to God's goodness, so seemed to me now the joy of my heart.

When it became night, and I had held prayer with my Zaporogean and yet once more reproached him that he had stolen my snuff-spoon, the garrulous man began to talk to me in an undertone and say: "I see clearly, little father, that you are in love with Feodosova, and in truth she is a good and pure woman whom you may take to wife. That you never would enter upon any love-dealing of another sort I have understood from the first."

"Such stuff!" answered I, "such stuff!"

"Truth is in the long run less dangerous than lying, you used to say."

When he struck me with my own maxim-staff, I became confounded, and he proceeded.

"The czar has promised good employment and wages to every one of you Swedes who will become his subject and be converted to the true faith."

"You are out of your wits. But if I could steal off and take her home with me on horseback, I would do it."

Next morning, when I had played my hymn, I learned that to-day it was my turn to go out under the open heavens.

I became warm and restless. I combed and fixed myself up even more carefully than at other times, and changed to the Zaporogean's ensign coat, so as not to wear my torn one. Meanwhile I deliberated with myself. Should I go up to her? What should I say then? Perhaps, though, that would be the only time in my life when I could get to speak with her, and how should I not repent thereafter even to my gray old age, if out of awkwardness I had missed that one chance! My heart beat more violently than at any affair with the enemy, when I had stood with my bandages among the bullets and the fallen. I stuck the flute into my pocket and went out.

When I came down on the street, she sat at the window without seeing me. I would not go to her without first asking leave, and I did not know rightly

how I should conduct myself. Pondering, I took a couple of steps forward.

Then she heard me and looked out.

I lifted my hand to my hat, but with a long, ringing burst of laughter she sprang up and cried, "Haha! Look, look, he has a wooden leg!"

I stood with my hand raised, and stared and stared, and I had neither thought nor feeling. It was as if my heart had swelled out and filled all my breast, so that it was near to bursting. I believe I stammered something. I only remember that I did not know whither I should turn, that I heard her still laughing, that everything in the world was indifferent to me, that freedom would have frightened me as much as my captivity and my wretchedness, that of a sudden I had become a broken man.

I remember vaguely a long and steep lane without stone pavement, where I was accosted by other Swedish prisoners. Perhaps, even, I answered them, asked after their health, and took some puffs out of the tobacco pipes they lent me.

I believe I disturbed myself over the fact that it was so long till night, so that I had to return the same way and pass her window in brightest daylight. By every means I prolonged the time, speaking now to one man, now to another, but shortly the Russian dragoons came and ordered me to turn about to my place.

As I went up the lane, I persuaded myself that

I would not betray myself, but would salute in a quite friendly manner before the window. Was it her fault that so many of the Swedish soldiers, of whom she had had such fine dreams, were now pitiful cripples on wooden legs?

"Hurry up there!" thundered the dragoons, and I hastened my steps, so that the thumping of my wooden leg echoed between the walls of the houses.

"Dear Heavenly Father," I muttered, "faithfully have I served my earthly master. Is this the reward Thou givest me, that Thou makest of me in my youth a defenceless captive, at whom women laugh? Yea, this is Thy recompense, and Thou wilt abase me into yet deeper humiliation, that thereby I may at length become worthy of the crown of blessedness."

When I came under the window and carried my hand to my hat, I saw that Feodosova was away. That gave me no longer any relief. I stumbled up to my prison, and at every step heard the thumping of my wooden leg.

"I have talked with Feodosova," whispered the Zaporogean.

I gave him no reply. My happiness, my flower, that had grown up over the heaps of ashes, lay consumed; and if it had again shone out, I myself, in alarm, would have trampled it to death with my

wooden leg. What signified to me the Zaporogean's whisperings?

"Ah!" he went on, "when you were gone, I reproached Feodosova and said to her that you were fonder of her than she realized, and that, if you were not a stranger and a heathen, you would ask her to be your wife."

In silence I clenched my hands and bit my lips together, to lock up my vexation and embarrassment, and I thanked God that He abased me every moment more deeply in shame and ridicule before men.

I opened the door to the outer hall and began to talk to the other prisoners:

"As wild asses in the desert we go painfully to seek our food. On a field that we do not own we must go as husbandmen, and harvest in the vineyard of the ungodly. We lie naked the whole night from lack of garments, and are without covering against the cold. We are overwhelmed by the deluge from the mountains, and from lack of shelter we embrace the cliffs. But we beg Thee not for mitigation, Almighty God. We pray only: Lead us, be nigh unto us! Behold, Thou hast turned away Thy countenance from our people and stuck thorns in our shoes, that we may become Thy servants and Thy children. In the mould of the battle-field our brothers sleep, and a fairer song of victory than that

of the conquerors by the sword Thou dost offer to Thy chosen ones."

"Yea, Lord, lead us, be nigh unto us!" echoed all the prisoners murmuringly.

Then out of the darkest corner rose a lonely, trembling voice, which cried: "Oh, that I were as in former months, as in the days when God protected me, when His lamp shone upon my head, when with His light I went into the darkness! As I was in my autumn days, when God's friendship was over my tent, while yet the Almighty was with me, and my children were about me! Thus my heart cries out with Job, but I hear it no longer, and I stammer forth no longer: Take away my trials! With the ear I have heard tell of Thee, O God, but now hath mine eye beheld Thee."

"Quiet, quiet!" whispered the Zaporogean, taking hold of me, and his hands were cold and trembling. "It can be no one else than the czar who is coming below in the lane."

The lane had become filled with people, with beggars and boys and old women and soldiers. In the middle of the throng the czar, tall and lean, walked very calmly, without a guard. A swarm of hopping and shrieking dwarfs were his only retinue. Now and then, turning, he embraced and kissed the smallest dwarf on the forehead in a fatherly way. Here and there he stood still before a house, and was offered a glass of brandy, which he jestingly emptied at a single

gulp. It could be nobody but the czar, because one saw directly that he alone ruled over both people and city. He came so close under my window that I could have touched his green cloth cap and the half-torn-off brass buttons on his brown coat. On the skirt he had a great silver button with an artificial stone and on his legs rough woollen stockings. His brown eyes gleamed and flashed, and the small black moustaches stood straight up from his shining lips.

When he caught sight of Feodosova, he seemed as if smitten with madness. When she came down on the street and knelt with a cup, he pinched her ear, then took her under the chin and lifted up her head, so that he could look her in the eyes.

"Tell me, child," he inquired, "where is there a comfortable room in which I can eat? May there be one at your house?"

The czar had seldom with him on his excursions any master of ceremonies or other courtier. He took along neither bed nor bed-clothes nor cooking utensils; no, not even a cooking or eating vessel; but everything had to be provided in the turn of a hand wherever it occurred to him to take lodging. It was for this reason that there was now running and clattering at all the gates and stairs. From this direction came a man with a pan, from that another with an earthen platter, from yonder a third with a ladle and drinking utensils. Up in Feodosova's room the floor was strewn deeply with straw. The czar helped with

the work like a common servant, and the chief direction was carried on by a hunchbacked dwarf, who was called the Patriarch. The dwarf every once in a while put his thumb to his nose and blew it in the air straight in front of the czar's face, or invented rascal tricks of which I cannot relate before a lady of quality.

Once when the czar turned with crossed arms to the window, he noticed me and the Zaporogean, and nodded like a comrade. The Zaporogean threw himself prostrate on the floor and stammered his "I Shwede. Devil-damn!" But I pushed him aside with my foot and told him once for all to be silent and get up, because no Swede conducted himself in that fashion. To cover him as much as possible, I stepped in front of him and took my position there.

"*Dat is nit übel*," said the czar, but at once fell back into his mother speech, and asked who I was.

"Blomberg, surgeon with the Uppland regiment," I answered.

The czar scanned me with a narrowing gaze, so penetrating that I have never seen a more all-discerning look.

"Your regiment exists no longer," he said, "and here you see Rehnskiöld's sword." He lifted the sword with its scabbard from his belt and threw it on the table, so that the plates hopped. "But for certain you are a rogue, for you wear a captain's or ensign's uniform."

I answered, "'That is a hard saying,' saith John the Evangelist. The coat I borrowed after my own fell in rags, and if that be ill done, I will yet hope for grace, because this is my maxim: To tell the truth is in the long run less dangerous than to lie."

"Good. If that is your motto, you shall take your servant with you and come over here, so that we may prove it."

The Zaporogean trembled and tottered, as he followed behind me, but as soon as we entered, the czar pointed me to a chair among the others at the table, as if I had been his equal, and said, "Sit, Wooden-Leg!"

He had Feodosova on his knee, without the least consideration of what could be said about it, and round them stamped and whistled the dwarfs and a crowd of Boyars who now began to collect. A dwarf who was called Judas, because he carried a likeness of that arch-villain on the chain around his neck, seized a handful of shrimps from the nearest plate and threw them to the ceiling, so that they fell in a rain over dishes and people. When in that way he had made the others turn toward him, he pointed at the czar with many grimaces and called quite coolly to him: "You amuse yourself, you Peter Alexievitch. Even outside of the city I have heard tell of the pretty Feodosova of Poltava, I have; but you always scrape together the best things for yourself, you little father."

"That you do," chimed in the other dwarfs in a ring around the czar. "You are an arch-thief, you Peter Alexievitch."

Sometimes the czar laughed or answered, sometimes he did not hear them, but sat serious and meditative, and his eyes moved meanwhile like two green-glinting insects in the sunlight.

I called to mind how I had once seen the most blessed Charles the Eleventh converse with Rudbeck, and how it then came over me that Rudbeck, for all his bowings, amounted to far more than the king. Here it was the other way about. Although the czar himself went around and did the waiting, and let himself be treated worse than a knave, I saw only him — and Feodosova. I read his purpose in the smallest things. I recognized it in the forcibly curtailed caftans and shaven chins at the city gate.

There was a buzzing in my head, and I knelt humbly on the straw and stammered: "Imperial Majesty! To tell the truth is in the long run less dangerous than to lie, and the Lord said to Moses: 'Thou shalt not hold with the great ones in that which is evil.' Therefore I beseech that I may forego further drinking. For behold, I am soon done with the game, and my gracious lord — who is both like and unlike Your Imperial Majesty — has in the last year turned me to drinking filtered marsh water."

A twitching and trembling began in the czar's right cheek near the eye.

"Yes, by Saint Andreas!" said he. "I am unlike my brother Charles, for he hates women like a woman and wine like a woman, and offers up his people's riches as a woman her husband's, and abuses me like a woman; but I respect him like a man. His health, Wooden-Leg! Drink, drink!"

The czar sprang forward, seized me by the hair, and held the goblet to my mouth, so that the Astrakan ale foamed over my chin and collar. As we drank the prescribed health, two soldiers entered in brownish yellow uniforms with blue collars and discharged their pistols, so that the hot room, which was already filled with tobacco clouds and onion smell, was now also enveloped in powder smoke.

The czar sat down again at the table. Even in all that noise he wanted to sit and think, but he never allowed any one else to shirk the duty of drinking and become serious like himself. He drew Feodosova afresh to his knee. Poor, poor Feodosova! She sat there, a bit sunk together, with arms hanging and mouth impotently half-open, as if she waited cuffs and blows amid the caresses. Why had she not courage to pull the sword to her from the table, press her wrist against the edge, and save her honor, before it was too late? Over and over she might have laughed at my wooden leg and my disgrace, if with my life I could have preserved her honor. Nor had I ever before been so near her and seen so clearly to what a wondrous work she had been

formed in the Heavenly Creator's hands. Poor, poor Feodosova, if you had but felt in your heart with what a pure intent a friend regarded you in your humiliation, and how he prayed for your well-being!

Hour after hour the banquet continued. Those of the Boyars and dwarfs who were most completely overcome already lay relaxed in the straw and vomited or made water, but the czar himself always rose up and leaned out through the window. "Drink, Wooden-Leg, drink!" he commanded, and hunted me around the room with the glass, making the Boyars hold me till I had emptied every drop. The twitching in his face became ever more uncanny, and when we were finally together at the table again, he moved three brimful earthen bowls in front of me and said: "Now, Wooden-Leg, you shall propose a health to be drunk all round and teach us to understand its meaning with your maxim."

I raised myself again as well as I could.

"Your health, czar!" I shouted, "for you are assuredly born to command."

"Why," he asked, "should the soldiers present arms and salute me if any other was worthier to command! Where is there anything more pitiful than an incompetent ruler? The day I find my own son unworthy to inherit my great, beloved realm, that day shall he die. Your first truth, Wooden-Leg, requires no bowl."

The pistols cracked, and all drank but the czar.

Then I gathered the fragments of my understanding as a miser his coins, for I believed that, if I could catch the czar in a gracious and mild humor, I might perhaps save my Feodosova.

"Well, then, Imperial Majesty," I continued, therefore, lifting one of the bowls on high, "this is Astrakan ale, brewed of mead and brandy with pepper and tobacco. It burns much before it delights, and when it delights, it puts one to sleep."

With that I threw the bowl to the ground so that it broke in a thousand pieces. Then I lifted the next bowl.

"This is Hungarian wine. 'Drink no more only water,' writes the Apostle Paul to Timothy, 'but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and because thou art so often sick.' So speaks a holy one to weakly men and stay-at-homes. But go out on the battle-field amid frost and wailing and tell me, to how many of the groaning would this bowl of sweetish wine give relief from pain and a softer death?"

Therewith I threw that bowl also to the ground so that it broke. Then I lifted the third bowl.

"This is brandy. It is despised by the fortunate and the rich, because they thirst not after refreshment as the desert for coolness, but would only gibe at the pleasure it gives. But brandy assumes power in the very moment it glides over the tongue, like a despot in the moment he steps across a

threshold, and the bleeding and dying draw comfort from a few drops. Therefore I call brandy the best, for I speak as a warrior, and to tell the truth is in the long run less dangerous than to lie."

"Right, right!" acclaimed the czar, and took the bowl and drank, at the same time that he handed me two gold-pieces, while the pistols cracked. "You shall have a pass and a horse to go your way, and wherever you come, you shall tell about Poltava."

Then I knelt yet again in the straw and stammered: "Imperial Majesty—in my pettiness and weakness—beside you sits a—a pure and good woman."

"Haha!" screamed the dwarfs and Boyars, who tottered to their feet. "Haha! haha!"

The czar got up and led Feodosova toward me.

"I understand. He who limps on a wooden leg may fall in love, too. Good. I present her to you just as she is, and you shall have a good situation with me. I have promised every Swede who enters into my service and is baptized in our faith that he shall become one of our people."

Feodosova stood like a sleep-walker and stretched her hands towards me. What did it matter that she had laughed at me? I should soon have forgotten that, and she would soon not have seen my wooden leg, for I should have cared for her and worked for her and prayed with her and made her home bright and tranquil. I should have lifted her up to my bosom

as a child and asked her if an honest and faithful heart could not make another heart throb. Mayhap she already bore the answer on her tongue, for slowly she beamed up and became flushed, and her whole face became transfigured. Far away in a corner house on Prästgatan in Stockholm a lonely old woman sat with her sermon-book and listened and wondered whether a letter would not be left for her through the door, whether no disabled man would step in with a greeting from the remote wilderness, whether I never should come or whether I lay already dead and buried. I had prayed for her every night. I had thought of her in the tumult in the midst of stretchers and wailing wounded. But at that moment I thought of her no longer; I saw and heard nothing else but Feodosova. And yet I was angry and strove against something heavy which weighed upon my heart and which I did not understand, but was only slowly and gradually able to make out.

I bent to Feodosova to kiss her hand, but she whispered, "The czar's hand, the czar's hand."

Then I stretched myself toward the czar and kissed his hand.

"My faith," I whispered equally softly, "and my royal lord I may not desert."

The czar's cheek still twitched, and the dwarfs in their terror pulled forth the Zaporogean from his nook to make the czar laugh at his ridiculous figure. But then the czar's arms began to move convul-

sively. His face grew gray and he trembled in one of his dreaded fits. He went toward the Zaporogean and struck him in the face with clenched fist so that the blood streamed from his nose and mouth, and with such a hoarse and altered voice that it could no longer be recognized he hissed: "I have seen through you, liar, from the moment you came into the room. You are a Zaporogean, a renegade, who have hidden yourself in Swedish clothes. — To the wheel with him, to the wheel!"

All, even the drunken men, began to tremble and feel toward the doors, and in his terror one of the Boyars whispered: "Bring forward the woman! Shove her forward! As soon as he gets to see pretty faces and woman's limbs, he grows quiet."

They seized her, her bodice was cut over the bosom, and, softly wailing, she was supported forward step by step to the czar.

It grew black around me, and I staggered backward out of the room. I remained standing on the street under the stars, and I heard the clamor grow muffled and the dwarfs begin to sing.

Then I clenched my hands and remembered a promise on the field of battle to pray for a poor sinner's soul. But the more fervently I spoke with my God, the further went my thoughts, and my invocation became a prayer for a yet greater sinner who with his last faithful followers wandered about on the desolate steppes.

The surgeon ceased with an anxious glance toward the coffin, and the lady-in-waiting followed him forward to the catafalque.

"Amen!" said she, and the two again spread the covering over the wax-pale Queen Dowager, mother of the Charleses.

END OF PART I